THE PARENTS' GUIDE TO SOFTWARE FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

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CD ROM GAMER
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CD-ROM PC kids

#2

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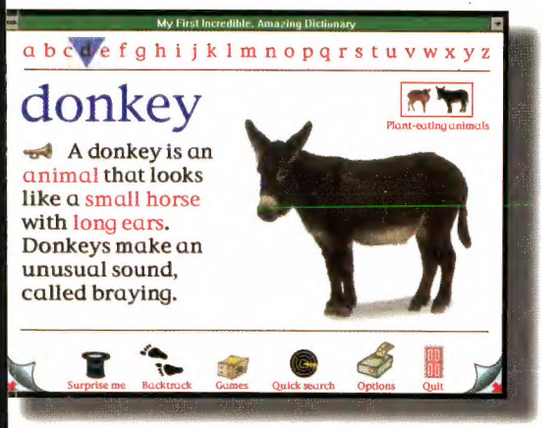
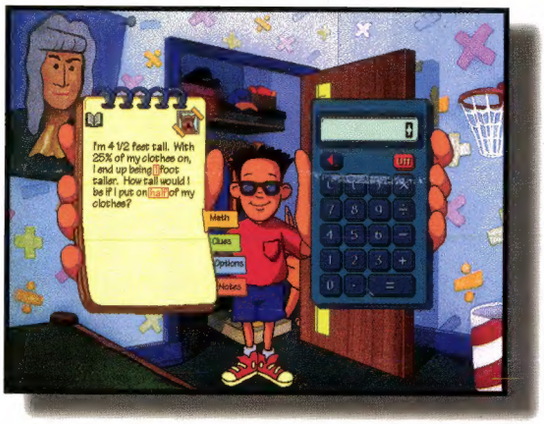


Primary software from Dorling Kindersley, EA Kids, Living Books and many others...



...through Junior software from Sherston, Mindscape, Lander and more...

...to Reference packages from Microsoft, Attica and all the big names

NO CD-ROM? PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT IMMEDIATELY!

CD-ROM PC kids

See back of magazine for full details of disc contents

Hundreds of edutainment titles reviewed

- News
- Opinions
- Interviews
- Over £800 worth of Sierra software to be won!

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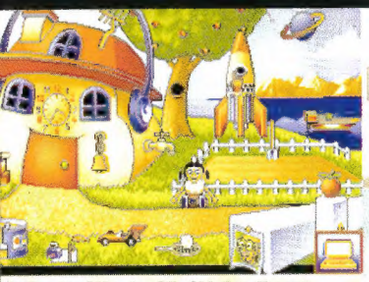
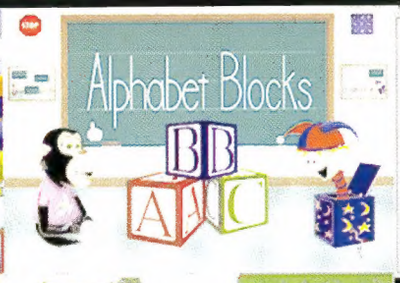
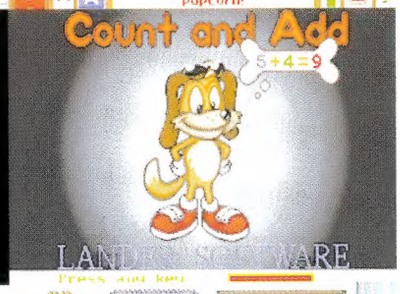
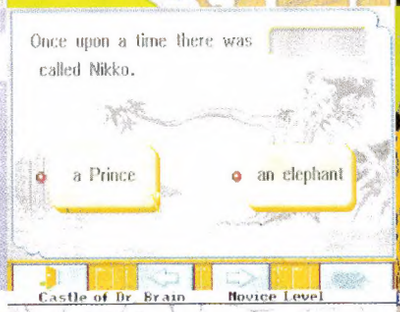


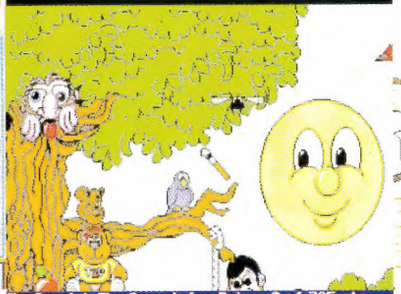

Alphabet Blocks

Click now to make popcorn!


Count and Add
5+4=9

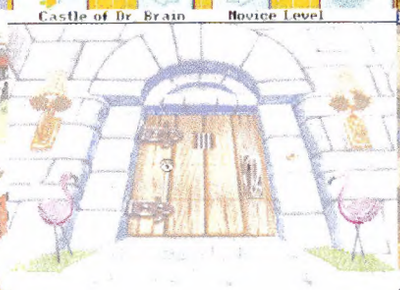
MARIO TEACHES WORD TYPING

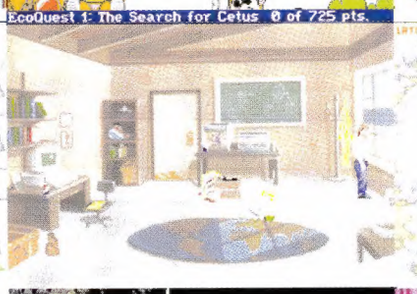

Once upon a time there was called Nikko.
a Prince
an elephant
Castle of Dr. Brain
Novice Level

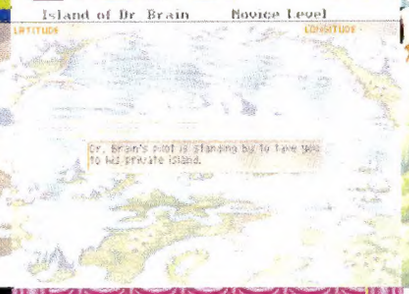

EcoQuest 1: The Search for Cetus 0 of 725 pts.

Yes
Island of Dr. Brain
Novice Level

SIGN IN
HALL O' FAME
PRACTICE
PREVIEW OPPONENTS
START
EASY QUESTIONS
st Secret of the Rainforest Score: 0 of 1000

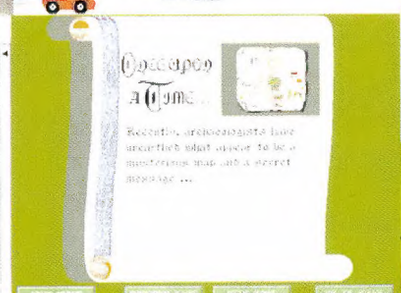




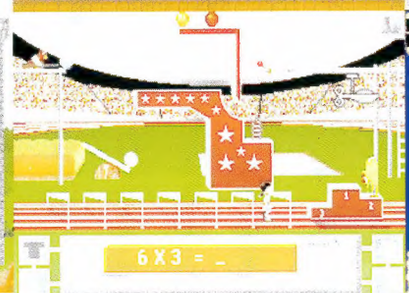

Dr. Brain's pilot is standing by to take you to his private island.

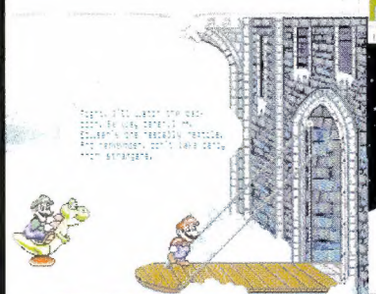
I can't believe we're here. I can smell the jungle!

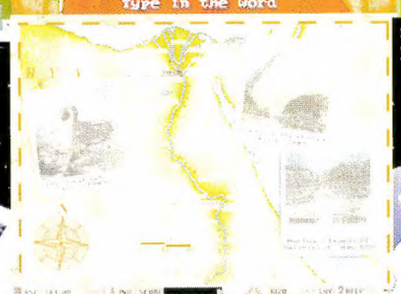
SOMEWHERE SLIMY IN BANGKOK



F1 for help.
00:00:45
Level M
dead
Type in the word


6 X 3 = _

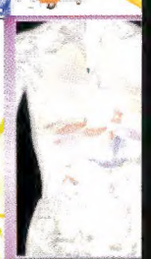




MIND GAMES

You are here
PLUTO

Bye, Peter!



Go
Stop
SPELLING LIST
APPLE
APPLE
ANKLE
Raising the anchor
POEMS
3 LITHIUM
6 CARBON
7 NITROGEN
8 OXYGEN
16 SULFUR
26 IRON
79 GOLD
FOOLS GOLD
80 MERCURY
109 ELEMEN T 109
Spodumene - An ore of lithium
What Asteroid!!!
HUTCHINSON MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA
Topics
20TH-CENTURY ORCHESTRA
Roberta Williams
MIXED-UP MOTHER GOOSE
Credits
New Game
English
INFOPEDIA
The Ultimate Multimedia Reference Tool
Index
Subject
Gallery
Search
Tour Guide
MATH RESCUE
PLAY EPISODE 1
PLAY EPISODE 2
PLAY EPISODE 3
PRINCIPLES OF SCIENCE
Cabbage
SHERMAN'S STORE
Jon is asleep. It is 11.30am and he should be at work.
spelling
anteater
An anteater sleeps nightly
How Do You Swallow?
GAME CHOICES
This is game 1 of 5 in this tournament
Choose a Mutanoid.
Ray
Bull
Babbies
Cameron
Lotta
QUIZ MASTER
Why are shadow portraits called silhouettes?
WARNER BROS.
Present

File Disk Tree View Options Tools W

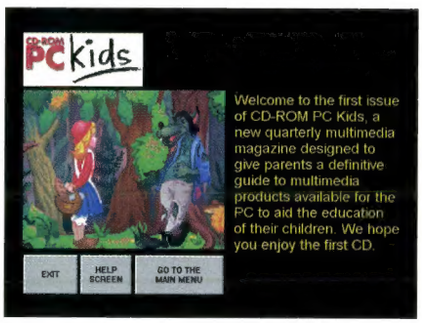
Tree Only
Directory Only
Split
Sort by Name
✓ Sort by Type
Sort by Size
Sort by Date
Contents

8 Disc Pages

We have a jam-packed disc on offer for those readers who like hands-on experience with software before deciding whether to buy.

From the human body and the inside of a telephone, to nursery rhymes and talking dogs – our cover disc has got the lot.

For full details about setting up your CD-ROM PC Kids cover disc, please turn to page 8.

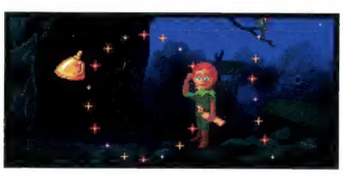


26 Primary Reviews

For me, the Primary software is the most fun – most of it is like eating a huge bar of chocolate and getting really messy. Or something.

32 Junior Reviews

A complete and concise round-up of the very best Junior software. Jump on the Magic School Bus!

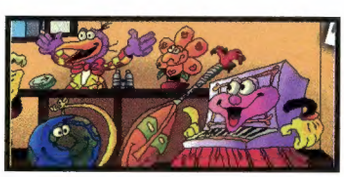


38 Reference Reviews

Reference software is a booming industry at the moment. We review the best available – now no one can beat us in the Pub quiz.

42 That's Entertainment

There's a fine line between education and entertainment. We round up some of the best entertainment packages for children.



52 Profile

Europress Software has been producing high quality educational software for many years. We find out how they actually do it.

51 **Comment**
Bill and Lou Bonham, from Sherston Software, give us their opinions about the educational software market

37 **Competition**
CD-ROM PC Kids and Sierra-On-Line offer readers the chance to win over £800 worth of prizes. Answer three simple questions correctly and return the form to us before the 1st April (no joke). Do that and you could win a Sierra Edutainment and Family Pack – that's 17 software titles in total! Get entering!!

Regulars

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We present you with an option to buy software.

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Buyers Guide 60
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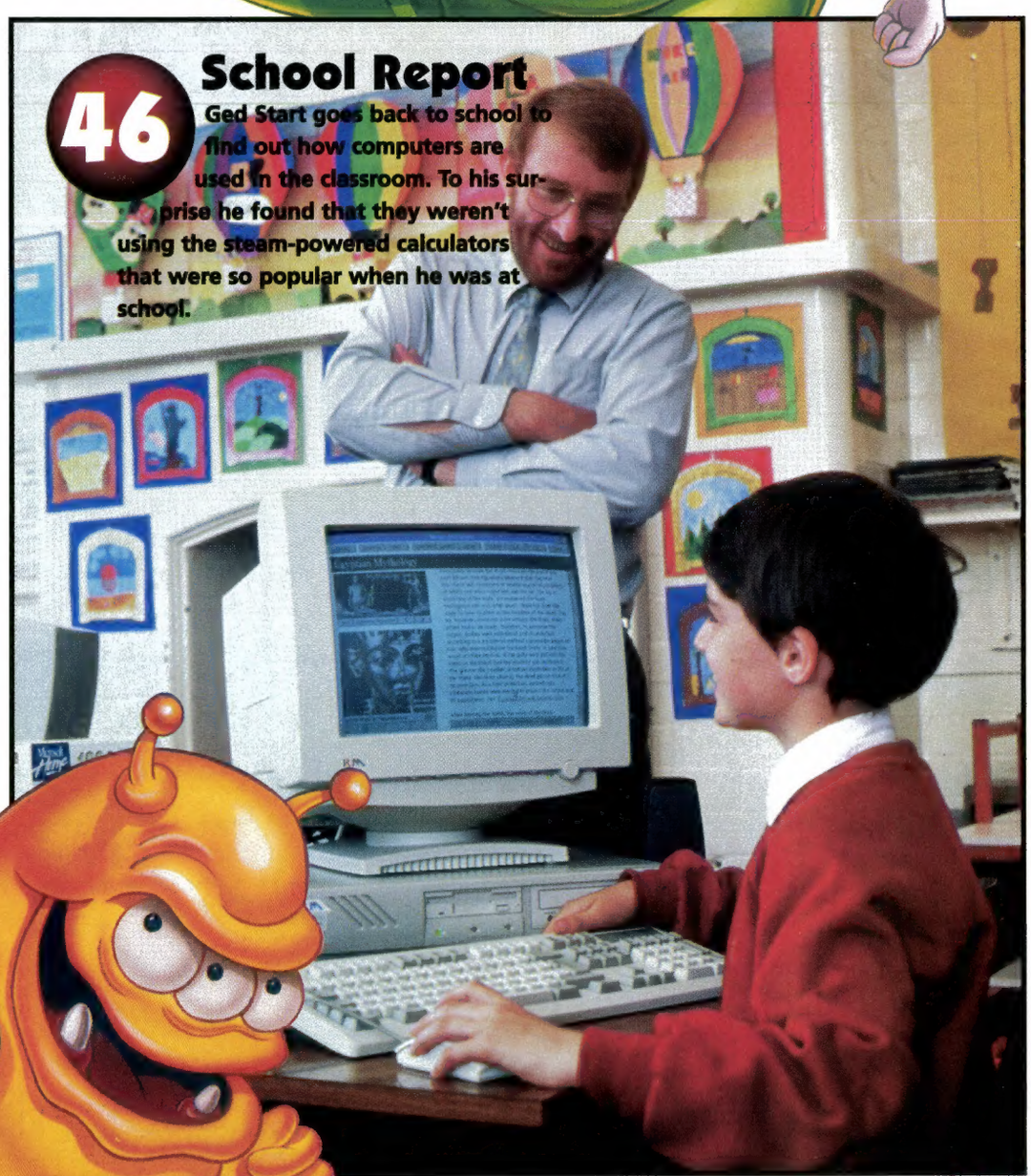
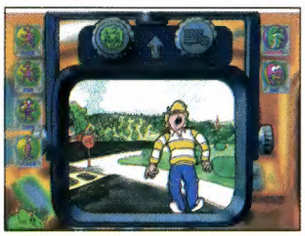


46 **School Report**
Ged Start goes back to school to find out how computers are used in the classroom. To his surprise he found that they weren't using the steam-powered calculators that were so popular when he was at school.

RIDGEWAY EDUCATIONAL MULTIMEDIA CD-ROMs



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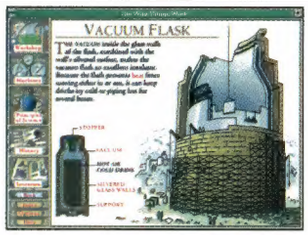

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Foreword

Paul Mallinson welcomes you to CD-ROM PC kids – the Parents' Guide to software for children of all ages.

Edutainment – it's the word everyone seems to be talking about at the moment. "Edu"cational. Enter"tainment". *Edutainment*. "The word sounds great doesn't it... but what is it exactly?"

In a nutshell, Edutainment is a marriage of education and technology – education and *computers*, to be more precise. A piece of software designed to run on a computer (regardless of format), that educates while, at the same time, entertaining. *CD-ROM PC Kids* is a magazine dedicated to the art of edutainment, and beyond.

This first issue of *CD-ROM PC Kids* is very much an 'awareness' issue. By that I mean; we're here to show you exactly what is out there – what is available to buy. Having said that, by no means have we been able to fit every piece of educational software ever created into this first issue of *CD-ROM PC Kids* – or every piece of software we've received at the office for that matter! No, what we have tried to do is provide you with a balanced overview of the breadth and volume of commercially available edutainment, and to report on the pros and cons of each and every title.

The cover-mounted CD-ROM – crammed full of demos (many playable) – should be a good introduction if you're new to the current edutainment market. Like any market, the place is a minefield. Finding really good software takes some doing, but we've managed to fit a generous spread of superb programs onto our front-mounted cover CD. For full details of the disc contents turn to page 8 and watch your eyes pop – just how did we do it?! I should point out that some of the demos were designed with teenagers in mind, so you might want to take a look for yourself before letting young children play with the disc unsupervised.

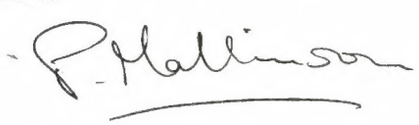
Inside the magazine itself, be prepared for the sheer volume of information contained within. We have four huge, software group tests covering Primary, Junior, Reference and Entertainment areas of interest, an explaination of basic MPC hardware, news and a BETT '95 show report, interviews with educational software developers, school visits and much more. The six-page Buyer's Guide to the rear of the magazine is the place to look if you need more information about a particular piece of software – all prices and publisher telephone numbers can be found there. Don't worry if there is any jargon or computer terminology you don't understand either – we've included a comprehensive Glossary to explain everything clearly.

For a long time now parents have worried unnecessarily about children and their relationship with home computers. The preconception is that children use computers for nothing but games playing – to some extent this is true, but the PC has much more to offer the younger user than games alone. On the other side of the argument there is also the point that with the right type of software, children can learn and have fun at the same time.

Schools know how important edutainment is to the development and understanding of children. That's why we have a report from Barrow Hill Junior School to show what can be (and is being) done in schools right now.

Although edutainment can be an extremely useful learning tool, it is necessary to know what each package is offering. Some offer little more than assistance in developing hand to eye co-ordination, while others cram several volumes of encyclopaedias onto a single disc.

We hope the magazine helps you when it actually comes to choosing the right software for your children – or even for yourselves.



Paul Mallinson
Editor

Disc Pages

How to get your CD-ROM PC Kids cover disc up and running.

About the disc

THE menuing system on the disc and most of the items on it require Windows 3.x to run. Wherever possible the programs will run directly from the CD, but a few of them do need to transfer files to your hard disk. The menuing system will make it quite clear when files are about to be transferred to your hard disk and how much space they need.

Some programs need a lot of free lower memory to run, so we have designed the menuing system to drop out when running these programs. When you have finished running these programs you will exit to the program or file manager. To make re-starting the menu simple we recommend that you install an icon as shown below.

To run these programs, we recommend a minimum specification of 386SX 4Mbytes of RAM, VGA colour monitor running at 640x480 in 256 colour mode, mouse, MS-DOS 5.0 Windows 3.1 or 3.11, CD-ROM drive 150Kbytes/sec or better, sound card, 580k free lower memory and 1Mbyte EMS.

Some of the programs will run on lower specification machines, but this is the MPC Level One standard that we work to. All the programs have been tested in Windows 3.11 on a 486DX 66MHz with 8Mbytes of RAM and worked fine in this configuration.

Running multiple programs, or having virus checkers running in the background, will often interfere with the correct operation of other programs. If you are having problems with a program, check first to make sure no other programs are interfering with it and that you have enough free memory. If in doubt, consult your DOS manual.

Quick Start

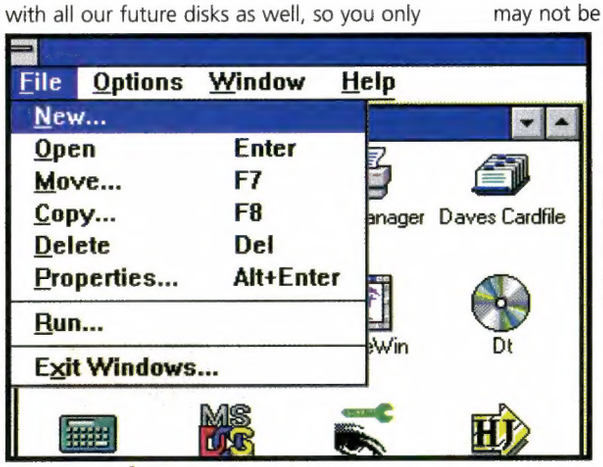
TO get the disc up and running quickly, open the ***File*** menu from Windows Program Manager then select ***Run*** and type ***D:\CDUSER*** (if your CD drive is not D: please enter the appropriate drive letter). Click on ***OK*** to get the simple menuing system up and running.

Alternatively the menuing system and all the programs on the disc can be run directly from file manager by clicking on the appropriate files. A few programs will work better from DOS, quit windows and change to the appropriate directory to run.

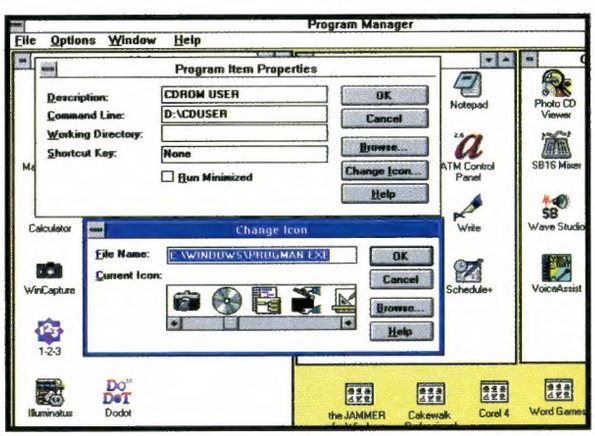
A full listing of all the programs, their locations and executable files is included in the menuing system and also in a file ***CDLIST.TXT*** which is in the ***FILES*** directory on the disc.

Installing an Icon

THIS method will not install any files to your hard disk and the code created disappears when the icon is deleted. The icon will work with all our future disks as well, so you only have to install it once. When carrying out this procedure, error messages saying that the program may not be there later will appear. This is normal, ignore them and the icon will be installed anyway.



From Program Manager click on File, select New and when the New Program Object box appears select Program Item and then click on OK



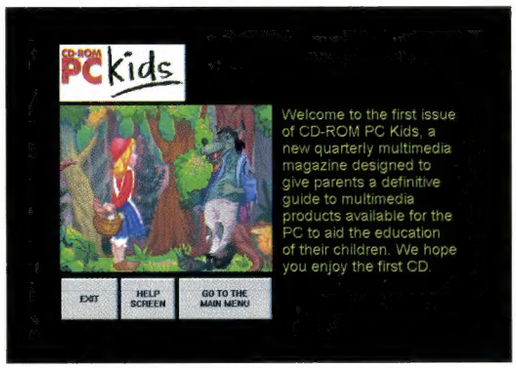
Type CD-ROM Kids in the description box and then your drive letter and the program name CDUSER as the command line. Click on Change Icon to allocate an icon to the program from those provided with Windows, such as the CD icon and then click on OK. This will produce an Icon called CD-ROM Kids on the desktop

Disc Pages

Contents

ON this disc, we have strived to gather a selection of demos from as broad a range as possible. You will find a true representation of the wealth of styles and types of education and edutainment software to suit all age groups. We have also included a selection of Instant Access pay-as-you-play versions from the Sherston range of educational products, turn to page 12 for full details.

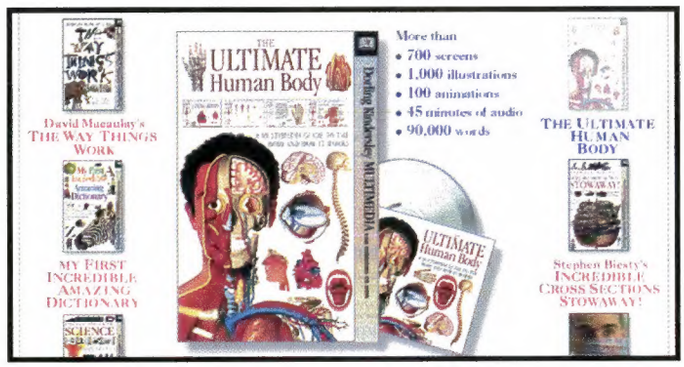
We strongly recommend that parents check the suitability of each of the products before allowing their children to try them for themselves. Some products have been designed with older children in mind and as such you may not want your younger children to see them. We have specified recommended minimum ages as a guide.

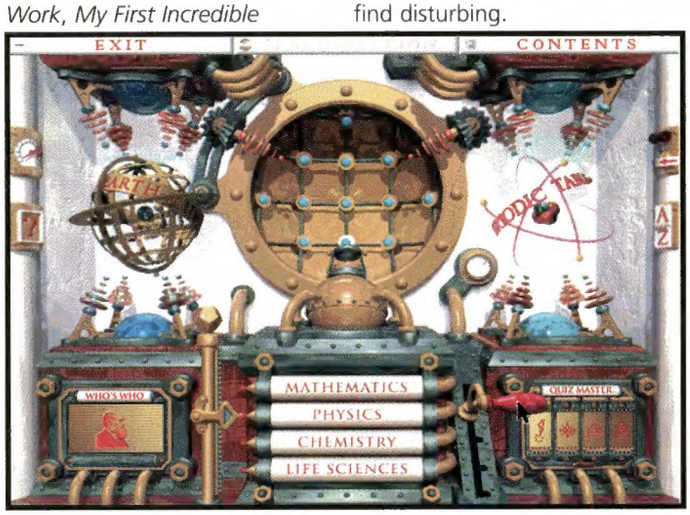


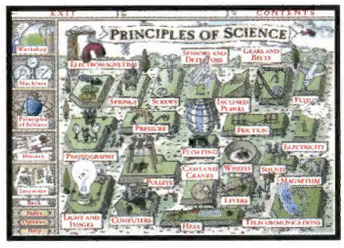
The *CD-ROM PC Kids* disc has been produced to enable parents to make informed decisions about which software to buy. *CD-ROM PC Kids* and Paragon Publishing will not accept responsibility for any upset or offence caused by children using the disc without proper supervision.

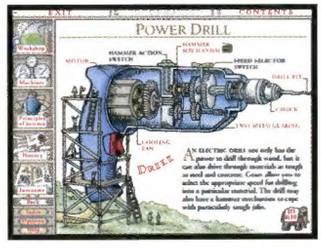
Dorling Kindersley Preview (13 years)

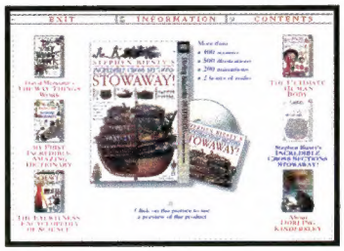
The name Dorling Kindersley is well known throughout the teaching profession as publishers of a huge range of text books. Today, DK not only publish books, but some of the best multimedia titles currently available. This preview gives you the chance to take a peek at *The Way Things Work*, *My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary*, *The Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Science*, *The Ultimate Human Body* and *Incredible Cross Sections Stowaway*. Parents should note that the last of the titles mentioned here includes animated sequences of sea combat and impromptu surgery that some young children could find disturbing.

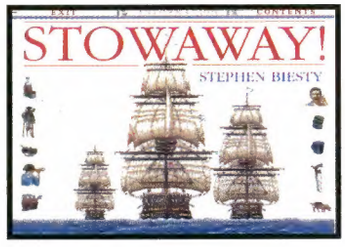






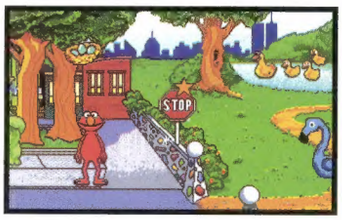


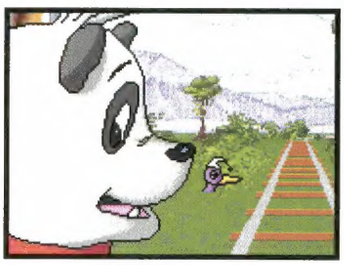


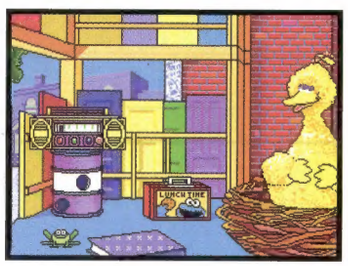


EA Kids and EA World Preview (All Ages)

Electronic Arts has been one of the biggest names in computer games for a long time. Now, they are putting together some of the best edutainment software currently available. In this special preview, you can take a look at some of the wonderful titles they have on offer including: *Sesame Street Numbers*, *Scooter's Magic Castle*, *Kids Art Center*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Peter Pan*, *Eagle Eye Mysteries* and *Counting on Frank*. Alternatively, you can check out *3-D Atlas* from the new EA World range. Some of these products are especially suitable for pre-school children.



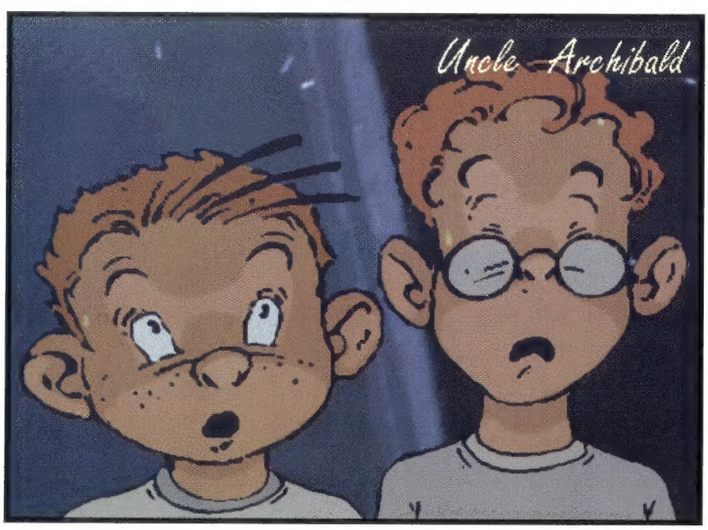




Coktel Vision (All ages)

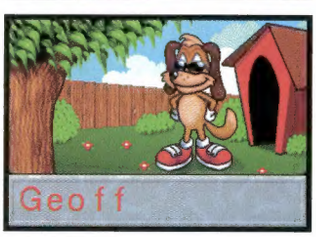
This is a rolling demo of the Superb Playtoons Collection from Coktel Vision. Full of friendly monsters and weird creatures, the full version of *Uncle Archibald* lets you create your own stories and characters, develop a scene and let the software do the rest.

If you experience problems running this DOS demo from either the menu system or Windows File Manager, quit back into DOS, change to the \CREATIVE directory and run the E.EXE file. The demo also comes with French (F.EXE) and German (G.EXE) narration.



Lander Software (All ages)

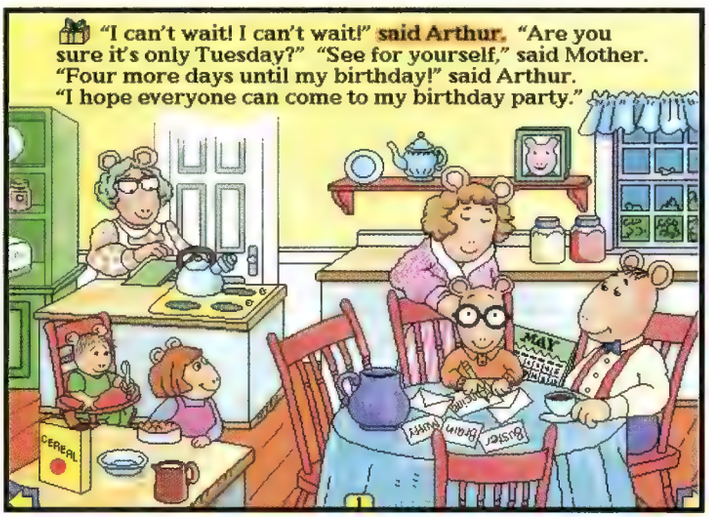
The Lander demos *Count & Add*, *Henrietta's Book of Spells*, *Hooray for Henrietta* and *Spellbound!* are four quality early learning packages brought to you in the form of demos. Each game will automatically detect your soundcard settings, and save a small setup file to your hard disk, which can be deleted.

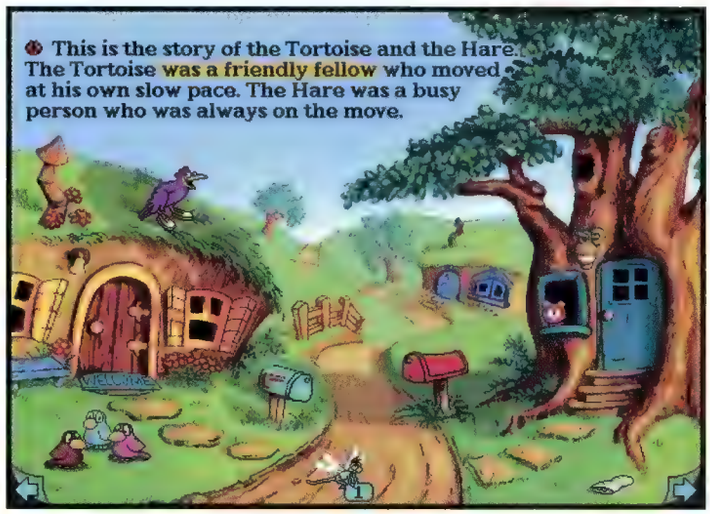


Living Books (All ages)

These Broderbund demos are of a very high standard – not only for the design and graphics, but for both educational and comedy value. The collection features *Little Monster at School*, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, *Ruff's Bone*, *Just Grandma & Me*, *New Kid on the Block* and *Arthur's Teacher Trouble*. Although each demo is limited, they are not short of entertainment value, and the full versions of each product are highly recommended for anyone's collection. The demos are worth watching for the dance routines alone (watch Arthur strut his funky thang!).

The Living Books collection works best with a Windows screen resolution of 640 x 480 – they will work in other resolution settings but will not appear full screen.





Mindscape (All ages)

The Mindscape software we have included on this first disc are excellent for the very young. *First Steps* is a package for the absolute beginner, with simple puzzles and problems to solve.

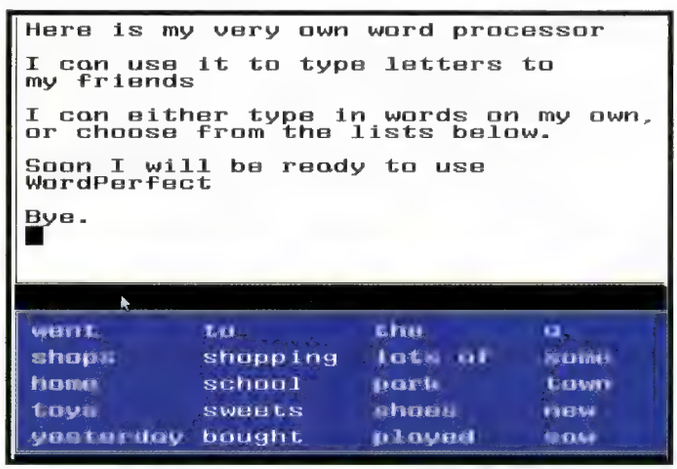
Second Steps is for the slightly more advanced – with more emphasis on strategy and planning in each of the games.

Little Artist is an arts and graphics package for the learner, with simple pictures to rearrange and colour in, while *Little Author* is a superb junior wordprocessor, with which a young child can create letters either by clicking on key words, or simply typing from the keyboard.

Some problems have been experienced running these demos from within Windows, due to the fact that the mouse driver installed through DOS is disabled once in Windows.

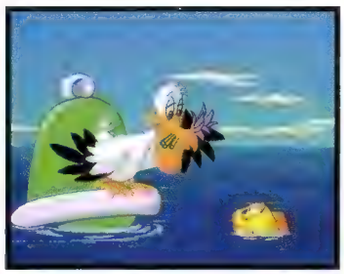
If you get a report screen detailing this problem – it is best to quit Windows and run each game directly from DOS.

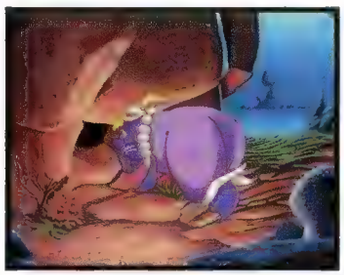
A full list of each game demo and its executable file/directory is included on the menu system, and as a printable text file in the \FILES directory.

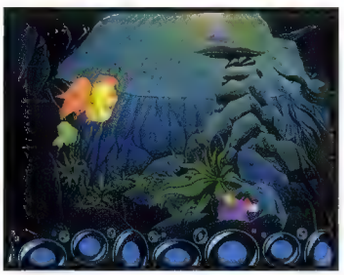


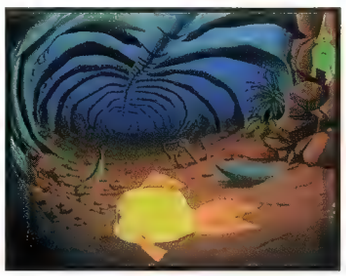
Electronics Arts – Additional Software (All Ages)

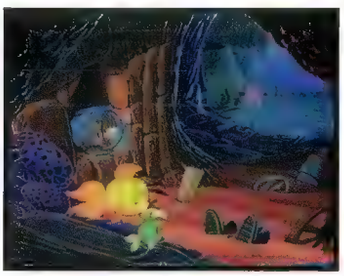
Try out this interactive demo from Humongous Software, published by EA, *Freddi Fish and the Case of the Missing Kelp Seed*. This point and click adventure teaches children about ecology as well as logical puzzle solving. NOTE: To run this Demo, you must have WinG installed (not provided).







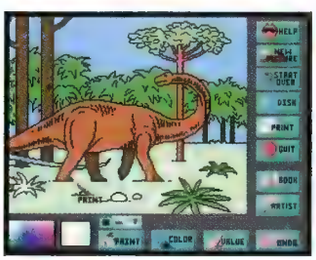


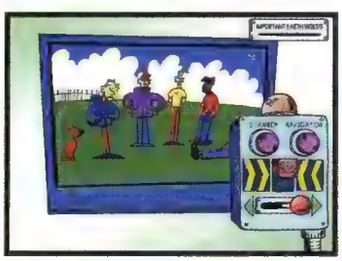


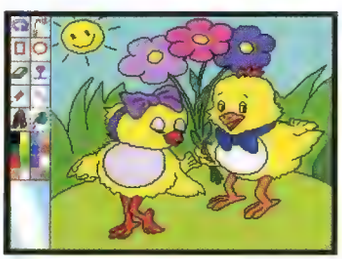
Pan European Software (All ages)

Software featured on the disc includes a host of stories and game demo products. *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Pinnochio Puzzle*, *Story Book Adventure*, *Discomix*, *Shapes and Colours* for ages 4-7, *Puss 'N' Boots*, *Cinderella* and *Wonderbrush* are all wonderful beginners software demos, with good audio/visual presentation. Before running the demos, you will be required to install the Voyetra sound drivers to your hard disk. Each demo can then be run from either the menu system or DOS with full sound.

Also in this section is the interactive demo of *Zargon Zoo* from Plum Software. This reading tutor can be run straight from the disc and is also suitable for all ages.







Disc Pages

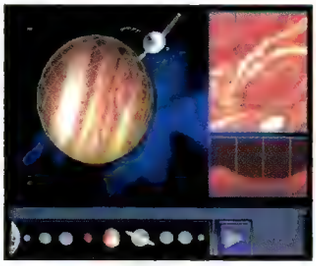
Scops (All ages)

There are four SCOPS software demos included on this issues' disc.

Adventures in Fairyland is a junior adventure game, with limited problems to solve. *The Creativity Centre*, *Wordland* and *Mindgames* are all useful interactive products which aim to teach the very young basic problem solving.

Stop Press

An extra program *Discoverers* from the Knowledge Adventure series arrived at the last minute and there wasn't time to rewrite the menu system to accommodate it. But as it's so good, we put it on the disc anyway. To run *Discoverers*, use Windows File Manager to access the directory DISCOVER on the CD and double-click on INSTALL.EXE. Follow the instructions on screen.



Tech tip

The Scops programs are DOS based.This may cause problems running from within Windows. An error may occur which specifies that the DMABUFFERSIZE is too small, with a suggested figure. You can remedy the problem by editing the line relating to DMA size in your SYSTEM.INI file. The line should be in the section headed 386ENH and should be added or changed to read:

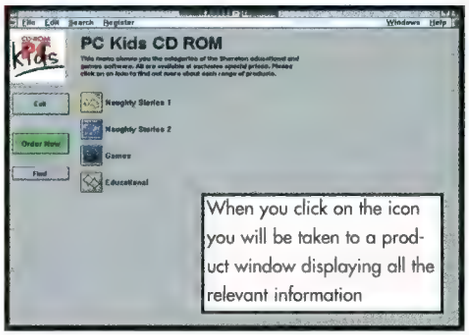
DMABUFFERSIZE = 24

Note that there are no spaces in the first word. After entering this line, restart Windows for the change to take effect.

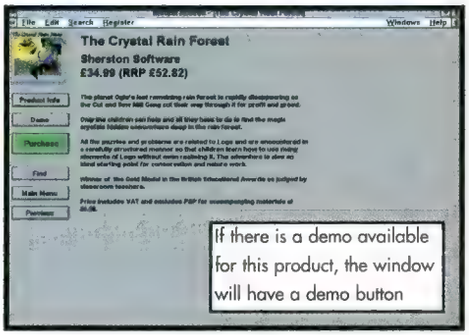
Instant Access

CD-ROM PC Kids in association with Instant Access, present you with the opportunity to buy Sherston Software products at greatly reduced prices.

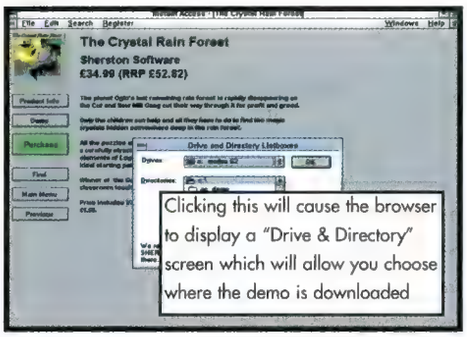
Double click the Instant Access Browser icon to find a comprehensive catalogue of demonstrations, trial and encrypted software packages.



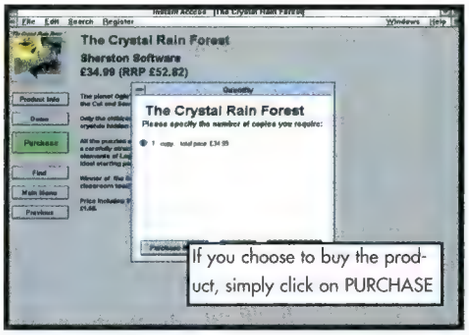
You will then find a menu options for more information on the Sherston range of software. Click on a button to access the next screen.



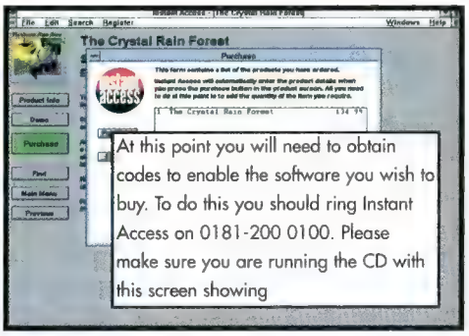
The window above shows a small picture of the product together with a brief description. For more information (system requirements, etc.) click the Product Info button.



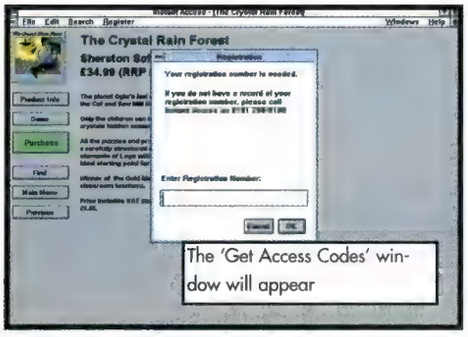
The "Drive & Directory" window will appear before any of the demos are installed to your computer



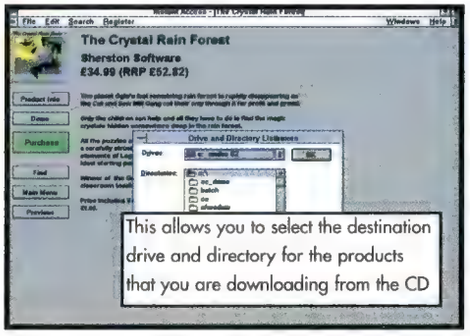
In the window above there are buttons which allow you to ADD TO AN ORDER or PURCHASE NOW.



To obtain the access code that enables you to buy the software, call Instant Access on 0181-200 0100



You will now be asked to read out the product code. Once confirmed, the ACCESS CODE unlocking the software will be issued



Once you have access to the software, you must then choose a drive and directory to download it into

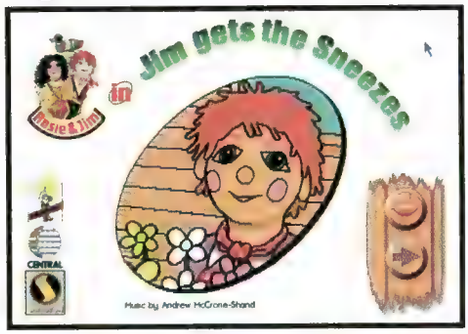
You will now be able to click on the RETRIEVE button for the package to be downloaded automatically. If in doubt call Instant Access on 0181-200 0100

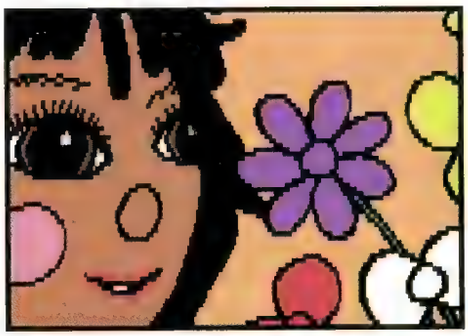
Instant Access

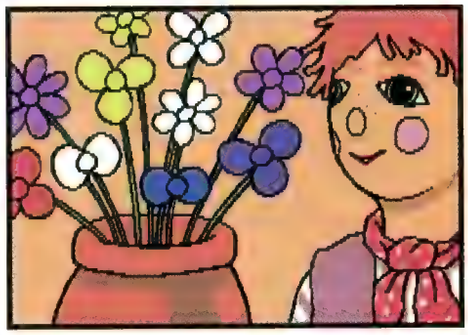
Rosie and Jim in Jim gets the sneezes

All the demos listed on this page are available for you to try straight from the cover disc. Follow the instructions on the previous page.

Children will love this demo featuring the two most famous rag dolls in the world. As well as a story with text and speech, children are encouraged to interact with this demo and practise identifying different numbers, shapes and colours.







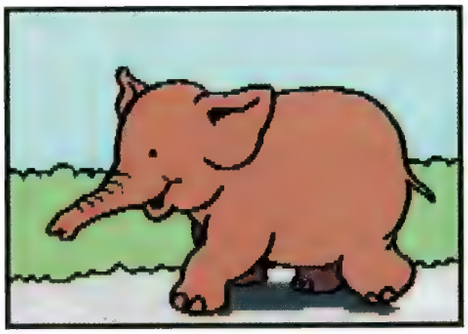
The Crystal Maze

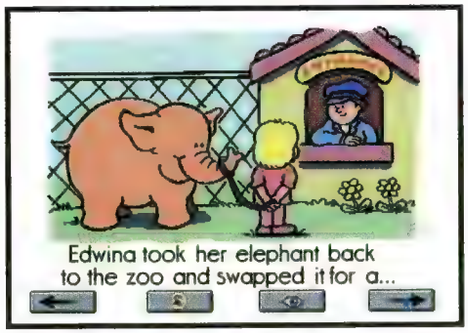
Sherston Software give Channel Four's popular gameshow the edutainment treatment. In this demo, you face the challenge of the Aztec zone. Choose between physical, mental, skill and mystery games that will test your mind and co-ordination to the limits. While this is suitable for all ages, the difficulty of the games will make it too tough for the very young.

A mouse driver must be installed for DOS use.

Naughty Stories

This one is for the young and the young at heart. Meet Edwina and her naughty elephant in this interactive story book. Speech text and animation are combined.





The Crystal Rainforest

Learn about the importance of the rainforest and save the planet from the evil Cut and Run gang. This adventure is suitable for all ages and features size and shape recognition puzzles as well as teaching respect for the environment.

A simple point and click interface makes *The Crystal Rain Forest* fun for all age groups. Mouse driver must be installed for DOS.

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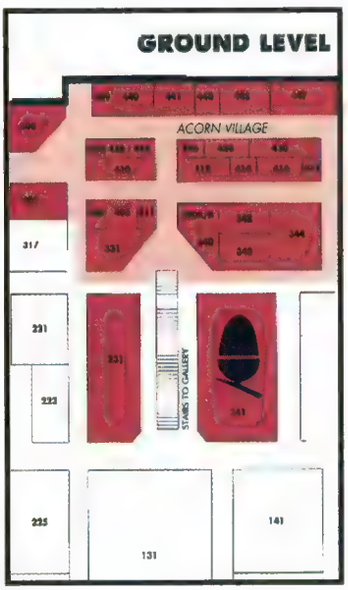
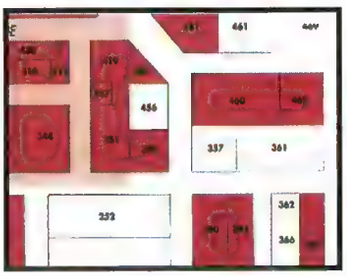
BETT '95 News

On the 11th of January the National Hall at Olympia played host to a dazzling display of educational wares as the Technology in Education show (better known as BETT '95) began its four-day run. After a opening speech read by Gillian Sheppard, the Minster for Education, the two-tiered hall soon filled with attendees and exhibitors. Many the major (and many of the not-so-major) educational software companies were there – Guildsoft, Dorling Kindersley, Microsoft, Sherston, Lander, Ablac, TAG Developments and Acorn amongst many others. Conspicuous by their absence were Electronic Arts (they were probably busy at the Consumer Electronics Show taking place in San Francisco at the same time as BETT), but we can forgive them for that.





With so much material on view, and so many people to talk to, we had a great time touring around the Show. Here's what we saw...

Living Books talk properly

Random House is set to release localised versions of the superb *Living Books* series in the UK. This comes at a time when criticism about non-Anglicised American software runs rife, with existing Living Books software being shunted firmly into the forefront of the argument. The decision to re-release this high-quality software in this new form is highly a welcome as far as *CD-ROM PC Kids* is concerned – now there's no reason for parents to avoid this rich vein of edutainment.

More Dorling Kindersley Software!

A publisher with, currently, some of the best educational multimedia software available for the PC, Dorling Kindersley were at the BETT '95 show to unveil a further four releases to add to the five already on the shop shelves.

The Dorling Kindersley World Reference Atlas, to be released in May, is packed with up-to-date, detailed maps, statistical information and a wealth of photographs and video clips.

Providing detail not possible in any but the very largest of print atlases, *World Reference Atlas* contains details of data on twenty topics including population, resources, trade, communications and climate for every country of the World. All the statistics are comparable – data on any country can be compared side-by-side, on screen with that of another country anywhere else in the World. With approximately 400,000 words, 9,000 screens and pop-up windows, 600 'zoomable' computer generated maps and around 500 colour photographs and video sequences, *World Reference Atlas* looks set to propel Dorling Kindersley to even greater heights.

Carefully designed to make a child's first steps in learning to read a pleasure, *P.B. Bear's Birthday Party* is an interactive storybook with simple games and activities interwoven into the basic path of the program.

As the text is read aloud, the words are highlighted, encouraging children to form links between the spoken and written word. When the narration reaches a picture in the text, it pauses and the picture animates, inviting children to guess at then discover the missing word.

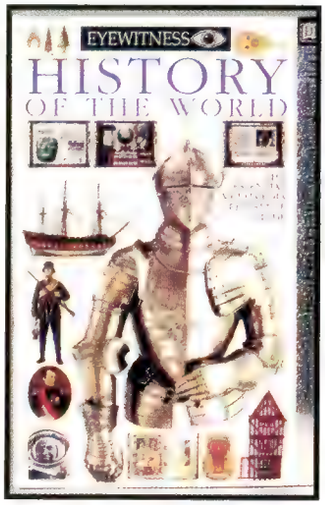
A number of specially-filmed stop-frame animations have also been included, with around 150 animated sequences in total. *P.B. Bear's Birthday Party* will be available in April at a price of £40.

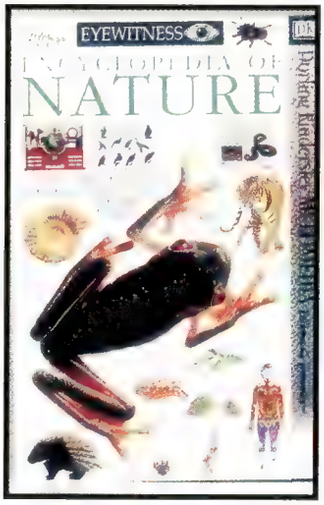
Also available April will be the second in the Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness Encyclopaedia series. *The Eyewitness Encyclopaedia of Nature* offers the chance to see plants and animals in their natural habitats, to listen to the call of the birds (and other animals in the wild) and observe their complex behaviour.

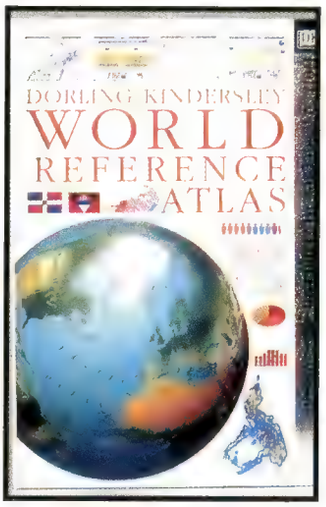
The package is filled with information on all the major animal and plant groups, and contains additional sections covering climate, microscopic life and prehistoric life. Also included are two fascinating 'books', Web of Life and The Green Book, which give an insight into the inter-relationships of the natural World and the latest thinking on environmental issues. Like all the other CD-ROMs in the Eyewitness set, there is a Quiz Master feature to test the user's knowledge. *The Eyewitness Encyclopaedia of Nature* should be worth every penny of it's £80 price tag.

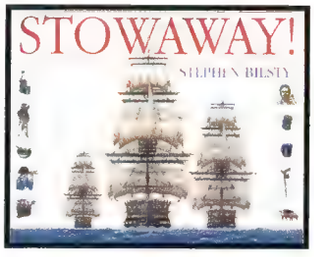
The final title on display was *Eyewitness History of the World*. With ten different time zones to visit, each stocked with historical objects and artefacts to examine, History of the World will be one piece of MPC software that junior historians will find absolutely invaluable.

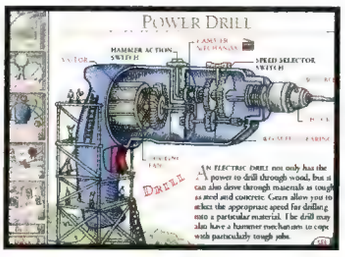
Like the *Eyewitness Encyclopaedia of Nature*, this final title will appear in April and will cost £80.

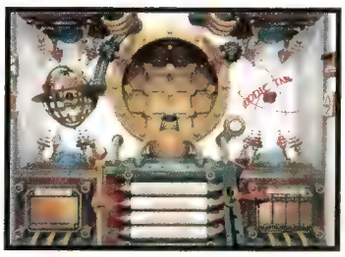


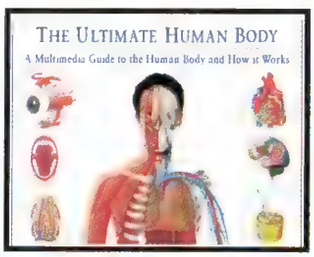












News

Award-winning collection from Lander

Glasgow-based Lander software have just released a new CD-ROM containing four educational programs designed to help children of all, ages and abilities to improve their language and mathematical skills. The CD is a compilation of previous Lander best-sellers, including *Count & Add*, *Hooray for Henrietta*, *Henrietta's Book of Spells* and *Spellbound*.

In August last year, the four programs contained in the Education CD-ROM were awarded the accolade of the top children's educational software reviewed for the 1994/95 Good Toy Guide, produced by the National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries.

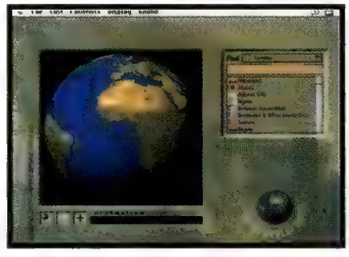
At a launch price of £64.99 the title represents excellent value for money. Call Lander on 0141 357 5034 for more information.

The World's not flat

EA World has announced the release of *3D Atlas* – a multimedia atlas which combines stunning photo-realistic and 3D visualisations with a 3-Dimensional database which covers the Geopolitical, Physical and Environmental aspects of the globe.

Key features include; over 20,000 satellite images, over 800 photographs, over 15 minutes of video, 12 news packages highlighting environmental issues, interactive exhibits, natural cycles simulations, five major cities that allow the user to pan over them at street level, plus a global trivia challenge that will test the users' worldly knowledge.

For more information call Electronics Arts on 01753 549442.



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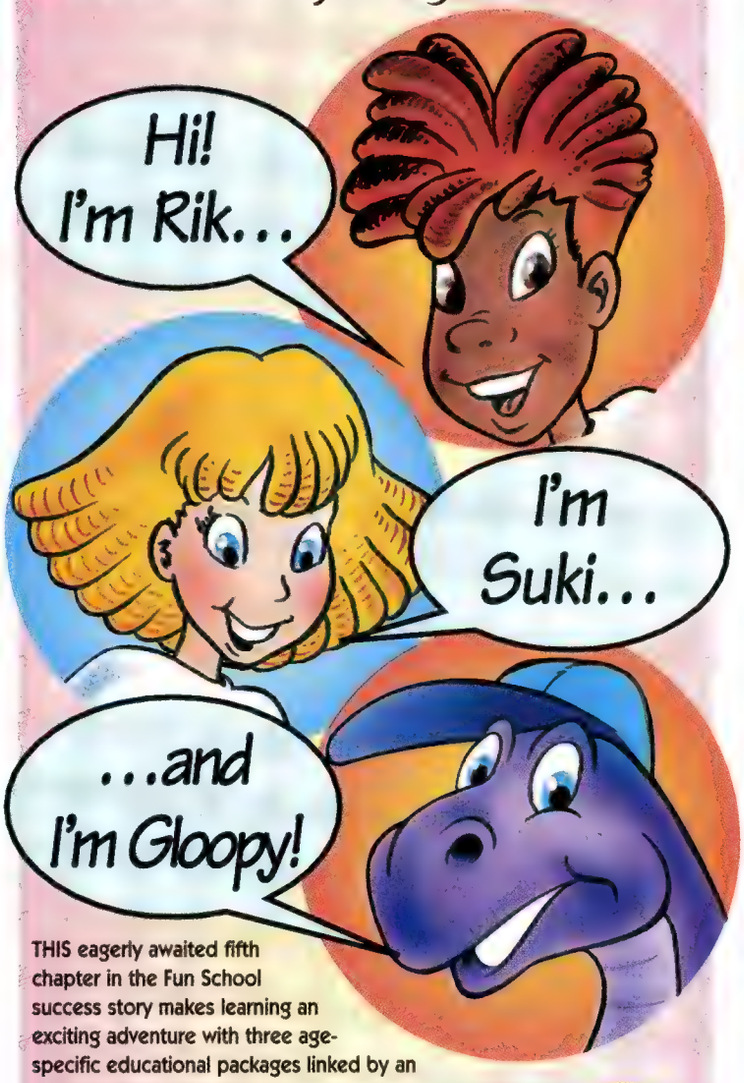

THIS eagerly awaited fifth chapter in the Fun School success story makes learning an exciting adventure with three age-specific educational packages linked by an adventure theme for youngsters from four to 11.

Children accompany the main characters Rik, Suki and pet dinosaur Gloopy on their exciting travels through Dreamland, Space and Time – learning along the way.

International Bestseller! OVER 800,000 FUN SCHOOL PACKAGES SOLD

Based on the traditional skills which have already made Fun School a world beater, each of the three Fun School 5 packages (rrp £29.99) has been developed with input from top educationalists to ensure that they conform to the National Curriculum and complement what children do at school.

Children will be motivated and amused by the fun games which are presented with brilliant sound and graphics – a unique combination of traditional values and twentieth century technology.

TECH SPEC

Minimum requirements: 386 DX 33Mhz, 4Mb RAM, 1Mb SVGA card and monitor, DOS 3.0 or above, hard disk, and MS compatible mouse. *(CD version also requires CD drive)*

Sound cards supported: Spectrum Pro Audio, SoundBlaster Pro, SoundBlaster 16 and compatibles

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Customer Support from Bowen

Having problems obtaining educational software? Bowen Partners is a mail order company which recognises the wonderful learning potential of the home computer. The company's objective is to be a resource for those people who use PCs – to provide information, software and hardware suitable for education, reference and learning. Bowen Partners provides customer support via it's new Night Owl support line (open Wednesday to Friday evenings and Saturday morning).

You can call for a more information on 01582 763539, or write to 29 Common Land, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 5BT.

CD-ROMs for Primary Schools

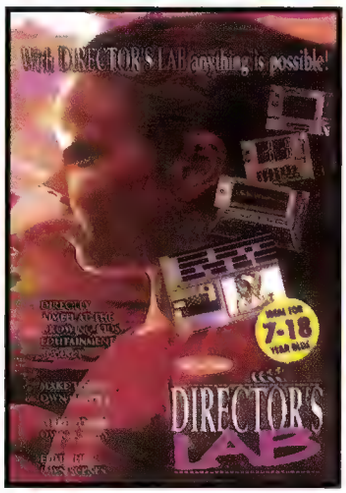
The National Council for Educational Technology (NCET) will be managing an extension to the CD-ROMs in Primary Schools Scheme, funded by the Department for Education to the tune of £3 million.

"This scheme is a continuation of the strategy which seeks to build on the classroom success of this technology. it will equip a significant number of primary schools with the technology for the future to meet the needs of the curriculum," said NCET Director Fred Daley.

Multimedia Authoring for Kids

Viacom Newmedia are about to release *Director's Lab* – a multimedia authoring tool designed especially for 7 to 18 year-olds. This fully-integrated creativity package has been produced in association with Nickelodeon and features on-screen help from Melissa Joan Heart of Nickelodeon's 'Clarissa Explains it All'.

Director's Lab allows kids access to over 472 photos and illustrations, 300 video clips, 300 sound effects, 70 pieces of music and 125 graphic stamps. Digital effects and film editing techniques can be used to create your very own multimedia software. The program also includes a number of flexible and easy-to-use utilities enabling kids to record their own sounds to be incorporated into the finished software. Completed videos can be saved to disk to share with family and friends. For more information about *Director's Lab* call CIC UK on 0181-846 9433.



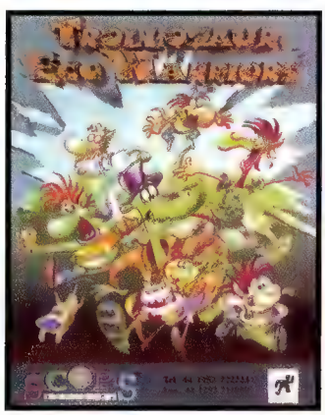
Scops ready and waiting

Scops has got a lot to shout about in 1995. With *The Animation Station* already in the shops and doing fine, the company now has a further seven (count 'em!) brand-new titles to add to its burgeoning catalogue. Produced in association with Israeli publisher Makh Shevet, all seven look unusual, colourful and fun.

Some of the titles are pretty strange, but they appeal to us because we're pretty strange ourselves. *My Friend Fear* is a program that teaches people to overcome or alleviate their fears. Fears confronted in the game include; fear of the dark, insects, reptiles, unknown noises, strangers, elevators, getting lost, water, animals, fire, doctors, and many more. Sounds like a great idea for a game.

Three interactive storybooks from the Biblio-Tech range – *Wall Leaves Home*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *The Frog Prince* – are on the cards, alongside *Battling Butlers* (an educational beat'em-up (!) with five different characters to choose), *Trollosaur: Eco-Warriors* (ecologically-sound edutainment) and *Nina Serena* (pre-school caterpillar adventure).

Scops will be releasing all seven titles early in 1995 but firm dates have yet to be finalised.



The UK's first specialist multimedia children's shop.

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Multimedia

When we say multimedia, we mean the latest CD ROM's for PC and Apple. But we also mean multimedia in the broader sense of science, craft, books, educational games and floppy discs.

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Who does 5-12 serve?

We're a self-declared Sega-free zone, so you won't find any thumb-twitching, violent games. We set up a year ago to serve the need for "brain food" for children from toddlers to teenagers. It's for graduates of early learning, their parents, teachers and relatives.

Come in and see us

When you've digested the reviews, why not pop along and try things out hands-on? It's the only way to avoid disappointment. At last there's one shop that's dedicated to the exciting world of children and multimedia. In fact, now there's two! Kingston upon Thames and Watford.

5-12 fun learning

5-12 Fun Learning. 2nd Floor, The Bentall Centre, Kingston upon Thames. Tel: 0181 974 8900
and now by the food court in The Harlequin, Watford. Tel: 01923 23 5212

To entertain, educate and inform children.

The MPC explained

The age-old image of the computer as an electronic typewriter is rapidly being changed by a relatively new concept in computing - multimedia. Multimedia is an important step in the evolution of the PC, it means that information can be relayed to a person using the machine through sound and video as well as text, creating an interactive environment which communicates in ways that any person can understand, no matter how young or old they are. This new approach has caused many changes in the way most software is designed, with both education and entertainment software benefiting quickly from the new technology, and creating the hybrid "edutainment" along the way.

The reason that multimedia has appeared so suddenly is the introduction of CD's to computing. A CD can store far more information than any previous computer disk, with the only drawback being that an ordinary MPC cannot write information to CD's. This extra storage is used to record the sound, images, videos, and text that multimedia programs demand. This diverse range of information means that the MPC requires many more capabilities than a conventional PC, making its hardware more complicated. Much of this hardware warrants further explanation for

MPC requirements

The Multimedia PC Marketing Council, whose responsibility it is to establish standard minimum requirements for Multimedia PCs, was formed in 1991 and the Multimedia (MPC) level 1 standard set the following minimum requirements:

386SX CPU, 2Mb RAM, 3.5 Inch (1.44Mb) floppy drive, 30Mb hard drive, single speed (150Kbps) CD-ROM drive, 8-bit sound card, VGA display, two-button mouse, Serial, parallel, MIDI and joystick ports, Microsoft Windows 3.0.

With the demands of the latest software outgrowing specifications, MPC level 2 was introduced in 1993 with the following differences:

486SX CPU, 4Mb RAM (8Mb recommended), 160Mb hard drive, double speed (300Kbps) CD-ROM drive, 16-bit soundcard, VGA display (640x480, 256 colours), Windows Multimedia extensions or Windows 3.1

The Monitor

MPC's need very precise displays, many are capable of displaying an image twice as accurately as a television. The monitor shown here has an energy saving feature, if the image it displays does not change for a few minutes, it will switch off the screen. This saves electricity and prevents damage to the display which can occur when the same image is displayed for too long.

The Front Panel

MPC's generally have three push-button controls on their front panel, power, reset and turbo. The reset button gives a fast way of restarting the machine without switching the power off, and the turbo button switches the machine between two processing speeds, so that software intended for slower machines will still be usable. Three lights are also mounted here, two correspond to the power and turbo buttons, whilst the other flashes when the hard disk is busy.

The CD Drive

An essential part of the MPC, it can store 650 Megabytes of information (over 200000 pages of text) and allows audio CD's to be played. Not all CD drives are the same though, some are faster than others. At the moment, single, double, triple and quad speed drives are available. The double speed drive is the most often used, it is fast enough to play video CD's and cope with nearly all multimedia software comfortably. The triple speed is a drive to avoid as it is, misleadingly, slower than a double-speed.

The Keyboard

With the exception of portable PC's, most machines use a 102-key keyboard, but not all PC keyboards resemble this one. Keyboards are now available which use "ergonomic" designs to reduce the risk or repetitive strain injury.

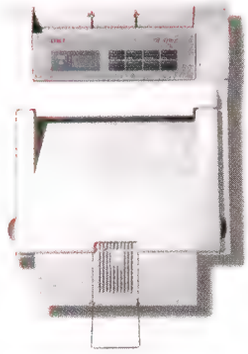
Hardware

Keyboard

The Keyboard is an essential input device. Most MPCs come supplied with a keyboard

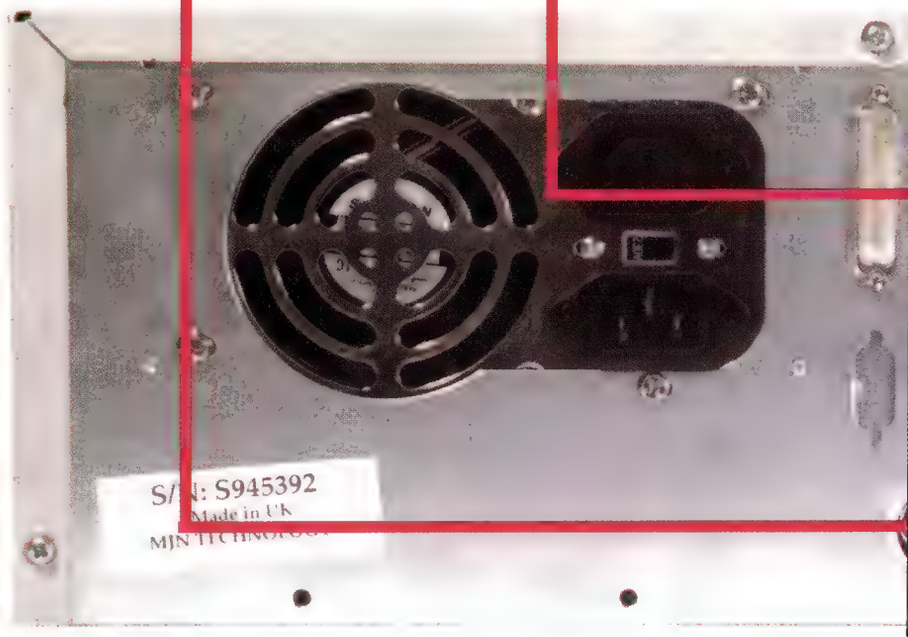
Modem

A modem is a device which allows PC's and other computers to communicate over a normal telephone line. All modems have a maximum speed at which they can communicate, the fastest can transfer at around X!X!X!X! Kilobytes per second.



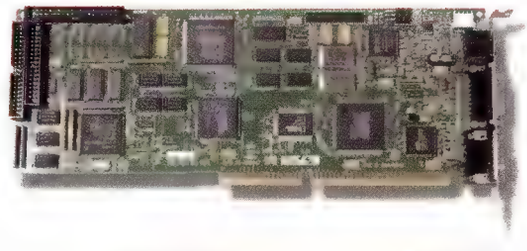
Printer

There are four main types of printer - dot matrix, ink jet, bubble jet, and laser. Dot matrix printers give reasonable quality text output, but do not handle graphics well. Ink jet and bubble jet printers give very good output quality for only slightly more money than a dot matrix, but they do tend to saturate the paper with ink when printing graphics. Laser printers provide the best quality output, but they are very expensive in comparisson.



MPEG Card

At the moment, this is the ultimate multimedia add-on. The MPEG card lets you play video CD's through your monitor with digital stereo sound. The quality of MPEG video is considerably better than software video devices such as Video for Windows and QuickTime and some of the newer cards even have 24-bit colour playback for the best results



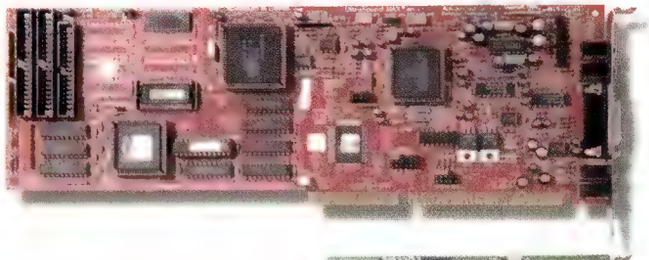
Hardware

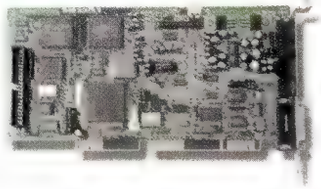
Mouse

Essential for working with Windows, the mouse lets you control complicated tasks simply by moving the mouse to point at areas of the screen.

Micro phone

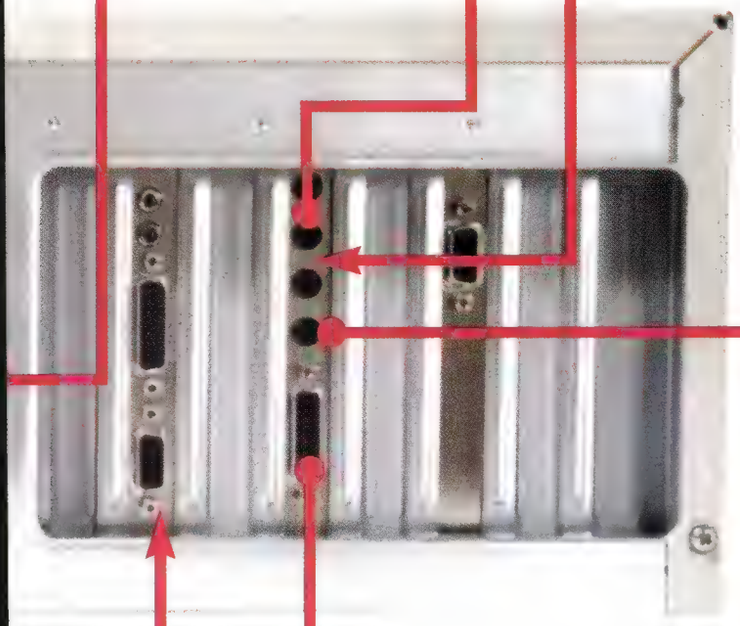
Most sound cards can record sounds from a microphone or other sound source, meaning you manipulate them through software. There are even Karaoke CD-ROM titles available which play a CD track while you sing along, and can save your work to the hard disk.





Sound Cards

A sound card produces either pre-recorded sound or synthesised music or both. Most allow the CD drive's sound output to be connected, meaning you can play CD's over your computer's sound while working and record sounds direct from CD's. Sound cards vary in performance and cost – make sure you buy the one that's right for you.



Speakers

If you can't plug your PC into a hi-fi, then MPC speakers are the next best thing, and there are quite a few to choose from. Most MPC speakers are designed to be small enough to perch at either side of the monitor, but more powerful speaker systems are available.

Joystick

There are two main types of joystick, analogue and digital. Analogue joysticks are mainly used for simulations, while digital joysticks are best for arcade games. Before a joystick can be connected, a game adaptor must be fitted to the PC.

Primary Software

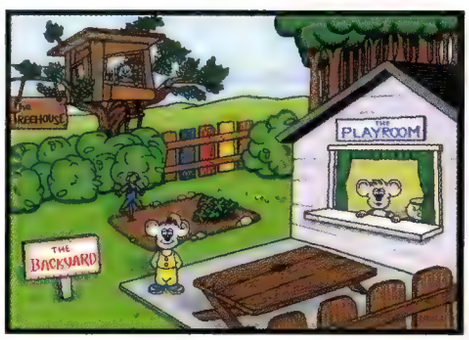
Choosing the right software for very young children can be of the utmost importance. Many of these packages teach basic concepts such as shape recognition, hand-to-eye co-ordination and understanding of language, and are therefore very simple. **Jason Spiller** groups them all together.

Back Yard

Broderbund

For most children, the first experience of the outside world is the back garden and Broderbund's *Back Yard*, if you can stomach the American vernacular, begins as a highly-imaginative exploration of a child's immediate surroundings. Then as the child progresses the magnifying glass is moved further away to reveal a broader range of topics. At its closest proximity, the program utilises various features of the garden, such as a vegetable patch, where the child can play anything from identifying different vegetables to creating a funny face from them. Similarly, a scarecrow's face can be used to show various emotions; angry, sad and happy so that the child can learn to associate words for emotions. There is variety of fun puzzles on various topics.

Rating ★★★



Read With Me 1 & 2

Word Perfect Main Street

The 'Read With Me' Series is well established in the home user market. Vibrant colour and vivid images are used to convey letter recognition, as well as word and sentence structure. Key characters Rusty and Rosey introduce and guide through a series of letter/word games, from Catch-A-Match, which teaches the alphabet and early stage letter recognition by means of size relationships and identifying similarities in shapes. There is a so-called Colouring Box – an electronic colouring book which is rather awkward to use – and a talking alphabet where kids can begin to create short story books. The importance of word shape recognition and the simplicity of the various characters is a bonus, but aspects such as the colouring book are not the best design.

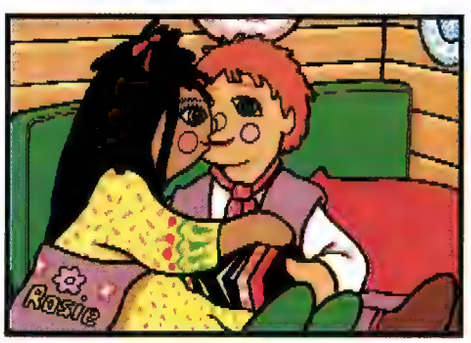
Rating ★★★

Rosie and Jim

Sherston

Rosie and Jim have emerged as perhaps the most popular tots' TV characters in recent times, thanks to a simple yet affective formula. There is a series of packages available based with the primary theme being reading and writing, with simple colour and object recognition to keep the element of fun. *Jim Gets the Sneezes* has full speech which children can 'ask' the computer to speak any individual word or listen to a whole sentence. Like the TV program, this presentation motivates the children and parents to look for similar objects in real life for reference. There is not a great deal to this program as it only features one story. Despite a lack animation and physical movement, Rosie and Jim are firm favourites which kids can immediately identify with.

Rating ★★★

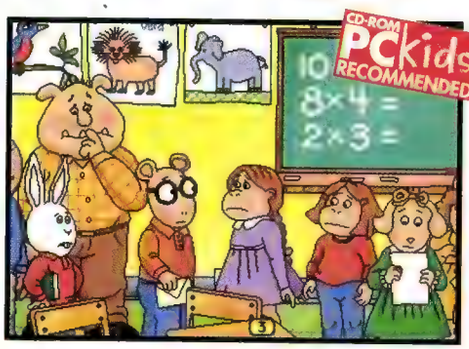


Arthur's Birthday Party

Living Books/Electronic Arts

The Living Books series are a firm favourite in the US. These beautifully-polished productions typify all that CD-ROM Multimedia should be – employing superb characterisation, animation and sound, humorous stories without detracting from the key objective; progressive reading and writing skills. By concentrating on one subject, The Living Book series can explore more fully the methods of teaching reading and writing skills in the computer environment, and it works perfectly. *Arthur's Party* is one title in the range and, like the others, it invites children to select various objects on screen. There's always plenty going on and the humour of the characters and stories keep children interested for long enough to want to progress and learn.

Rating ★★★★★



Teddy's Big Day

Mindscape

There are few recommendable Pre-school age titles because the simplicity of the subject often makes the product uninteresting. 2 to 5 year old children have a very short interest span and a lack of co-ordination with the computer can lead to frustration. With a fun and colourful animated picture book presentation, *Teddy's Big Day Out* is one of the few more successful titles. The main character has been carefully designed to appeal and the stories deal with objects and events that children of this age are comfortable with. The graphics are bright and colourful, the music has a strong rhythm which kids love and the mini-stories are simple and repetitive actions and situations which is the most affective form of learning in this age group.

Rating ★★★★

Mario Teaches Words

Mindscape

This is one of a series of edutainment titles starring the cult video game characters Super Mario Brothers. In *Mario Teaches Words* Mario guides us through "The Wonderful World of Words" with a combination of an interactive video game designed to teach the understanding of letters, language and diction. Letter Sound World introduces children to the concept of looking at and listening to words as they are formed and spoken. Alphabet World illustrates the shape and sounds of letters. The program progresses to 'Ending World' which introduces the vowel sounds. Both the presentation and structure have been carefully designed to make the process of learning almost invisible, which is particularly useful for less patient children.

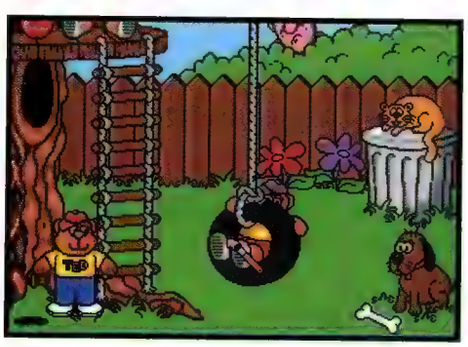
Rating ★★★★

Paint and Create

Europress Software

The Fun School series is well established and has an ever-growing range of edutainment software that is always well received by schools. *Paint and Create* is the latest and with its unique approach, typical of the range, children can explore a number of creative pursuits from making music to art which has practical uses like designing greetings cards. What makes it fun is the element of role-playing. For example, in Music Maestro, the child can create a pop group, hear how they sound and play along with any one of five instrument synthesised sounds. The painting section features Arts Alive, a simple drawing and colouring program and Monster Maker which features a rogues gallery as well as the opportunity to create some weird and crazy characters.

Rating ★★★★

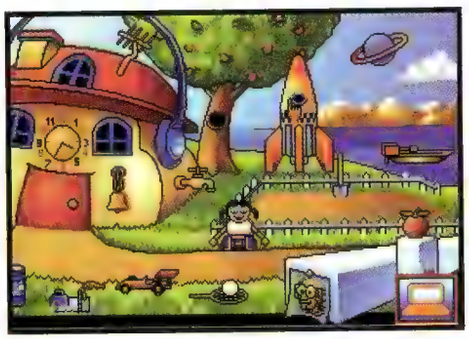


ADI Junior Helps With Counting

Europress Software

Like most of the 'learn to count' software available, ADI Junior features a number of different methods designed to get as far away from the traditional forms of teaching basic maths as possible. By using games such as object matching games and spot the difference, the key objective is to motivate children to progress with counting. Games vary from a mouse moving from square to square nibbling seed as the child counts, to setting a course for the tortoises journey, all cleverly developed to expand counting skills. All exercises take place in entertaining worlds which children warm to immediately. The images of toys and and animals are always a winner with youngsters. With ten individual games, there's plenty of variety.

Rating ★★★★

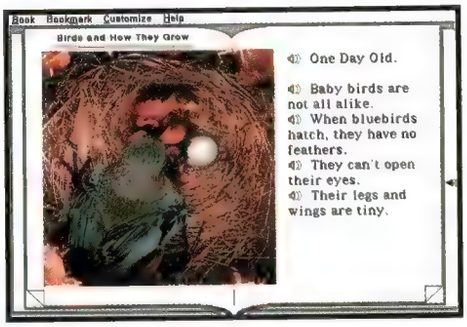


Birds and How they Grow

Discis

Birds and How they Grow is one of many titles in a science and nature collection from Discis Books. Like all the series, this program contains text which you can choose to have read by the computer while the child follows the words. The documentary is described it is accompanied by still pictures depicting what the text is explaining and background music. The tutorial goes into detail on all aspects of bird life and children learn of the experiences of each species from the egg to full flight. The basic story with text and illustrations is effective enough to retain a child's attention, then Phonics and reading excercises are introduced to help with pronunciation, syllables and speech. If *Birds* had more animation or movement it would be more successful.

Rating ★★

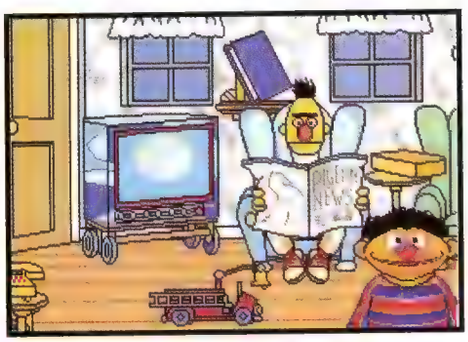


Sesame Street Numbers

EA*Kids

Sesame Street Numbers features all the characters that kids adore with some very inventive number games utilising full animation and voice synthesis which really brings the program to life. Each character has his own game, whether it be finding paperclips in Bert and Ernie's house or searching for bats in the kooky Count's castle. A nice touch is that every Sesame Street friend has a storybook, radio, television and a phone which enables children to communicate with the characters. There's also a Sesame Street theatre. With my six year old daughter, Sesame Street program had a distinct advantage over many in this test as she immediately identified with the characters. But behind the famous face is a thoroughly well designed edutainment package.

Rating ★★★★

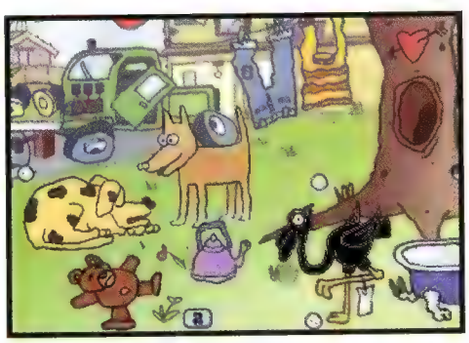


Ruff's Bone

Living Books/Electronic Arts

One of the 'Living Books' series, *Ruff's Bone* is typical of this excellent range. The general subjects are reading and pronunciation with excellent characters and scenarios bringing life to a traditional storybook-style presentation. With clear diction from the computer story teller, parents can modify the speed of the narration and the words are highlighted as they are spoken. The whole program is interactive and children can click on any character or object on screen to get some sort of reaction. Ruff's Bone is a great fun story and the interactivity is a joy. But what makes *Ruff's Bone* and all the living book series is the almost Simpson-like characterisations and capers. Most of all, no matter what the age group the software is aimed the humour is never patronising.

Rating ★★★★



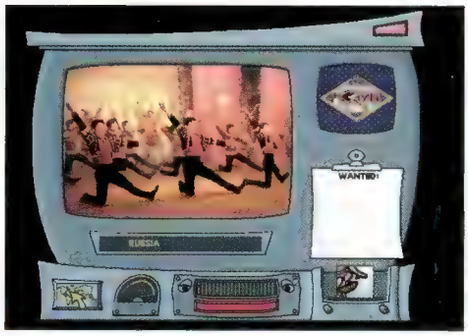
Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?

Broderbund

First there was *Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego*, very much adult adventure. Now for younger audience, *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego* uses the same presentation but the key objective is sleuthing for children. Placing the child as a private eye in pursuit of Carmen Sandiego and her gang who are perpetrating crime around the globe, the subject is geography. As the P.I. goes from one country to another the adventure is merged with geographical facts and interesting information about the cities, the people and the cultures.

There are also geographical puzzles with clues such as identifying flags, animals and local products to help with solving the crimes and leading to the capture of the villains.

Rating ★★★

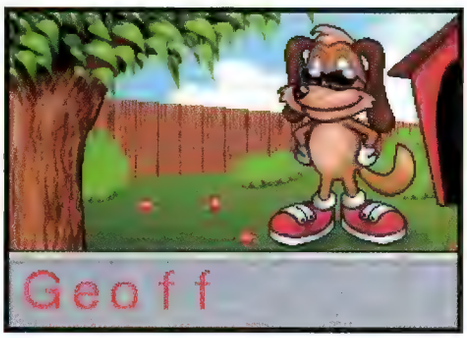


Count and Add

Lander Software

This simple pre-school program is typical of the type used in early school stages. Here under fives have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with this type of package. At its most basic levels, a series of colourful screens featuring a wide variety of objects, shapes and animals introducing the child to the basics of counting. This is basic in presentation but representative of the type of programs encountered at nursery and primary school. At first glance *Count and Add* appears rather bland and uninteresting in comparison to some of the more polished productions. But for pre-school children, the simpler the design – the more at ease they feel. The means that children can concentrate on the subject in question rather than being distracted by fancy graphics.

Rating ★★



Adventures in Fairyland

Scops

For most of us, fairy tales are the first story experiences and Adventures in Fairyland, one of a series in the Interactive Storybook range contains a very typical yarn that children can interactive with. The design is a simple role-playing style adventure where children can access music or watch animated action while reading the story, and each screen can be turned into a puzzle. Also included is an art package where colours can be added to line drawings of fairy tale characters and their surroundings. You may question whether a fairy tale has anything to offer in terms of entertainment. It is more a lesson in logic, observation and problem solving in an adventure style similar in design to mainstream role-playing adventures. Primarily, its main objectiive is to encourage children to read. Beautiful graphic s and soundtracks from Beethoven, Mozart and Vivaldi.

Rating ★★

Kid Phonics

Ablac

Kid Phonics takes the approach of teaching reading through songs in association with some very thoughtfully designed letter and word games. Controlled though an excellent menu interface, the questions are about rhymes and classic folk songs. Additionally, picture galleries show environments as diverse as a rain forest to an amusement arcade and two characters called Sound Busters create sentences about an object which children can colour in. Also there's a dictionary for storing all the new words that are learnt. This musical theme is one of the best ways of encouraging children to associate words with the songs they are singing and the sub games are absorbing and an affective pre-occupation to the main objective. All children love songs and singing and so this is a great way of teaching new words and pronunciation.

Rating ★★★★

Computer Carnival

Europress Software

Computer Carnival is an introduction to using computers based around attractions at a fairground which encourages children to get to grips with using both keyboard and mouse. Keyboard Derby is a race for animals and the quicker a child taps the keyboard the faster the animal runs. Meanwhile, Memory Match-up pits a child's quick-thinking and mouse/cursor co-ordination against the computer, matching up different pictures in a grid. This program is Ideal for familiarising children with computers and as a tool for improving co-ordination in the computer environment, *Carnival* is quite unique. Europress Software has acknowledged the importance of children becoming familiar with the computer environment.

Rating ★★★

Upside Town

Scops

This vibrant and highly-imaginative interactive adventure combines puzzle-solving memory games and general shape and size awareness all in an interactive type of fairy tale adventure that children love. It's a basic struggle of good, the kind magician and evil, a wicked witch who has turned an entire town topsy-turvy. In this disorientating environment, children must make sense of the surroundings and solve a number of conundrums and puzzles to right the town and rescue the magician from the clutches of the witch. Great graphics and animation, endearing characters and a terrific storyline, *Upside Town* is a refreshing change from academic tutoring as it stimulates children's perception and awareness which is of equal importance.

Rating ★★★★

Around the World in 80 Days

EA*Kids

Another title from the prolific edutainment stable EA Kids. *Around the World in the 80 Days* broaches a wide range of topics from vocabulary and reading to Geography and decision-making. This is an animated story which is fully interactive. Following the storytelling, children can select a "Paintbox Pal" Nick, Winston, Jazz or Sally to help solve puzzles. At any moment, the computer will give interesting information about people and places as well as cultural and geographical information. There are hundreds of possible interactive solutions to be made and in the course of being engrossed in this superb adventure children are learning to make decisions, learning interesting facts and improving reading comprehension. Top quality edutainment.

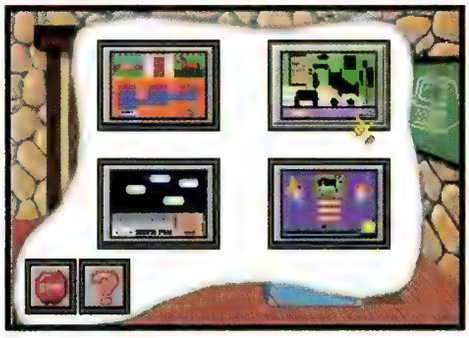
Rating ★★★★★

Wordland

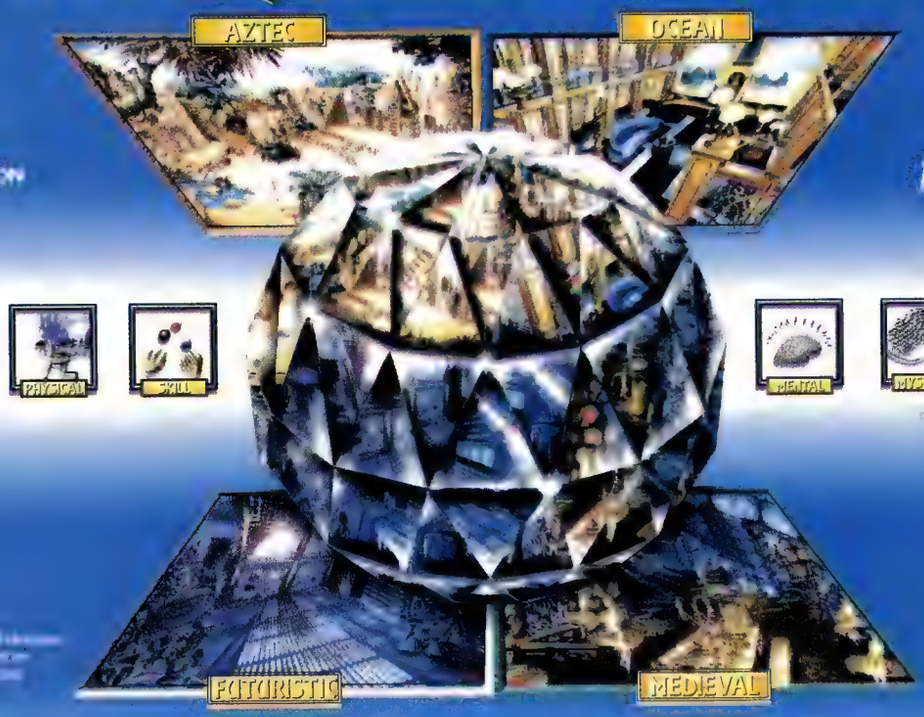
Scops

Wordland is one of a growing number of edutainment titles that bases reading and vocabulary tutorial around a number of different puzzle games. Some of these puzzle game-based educational programs, particularly reading and writing can actually cause unnecessary confusion in the course of learning. But Wordland is one of the more successful at this due primarily to the clarity and comprehensivness of its layout and the simplistic but enjoyable games. Word Maze inivites children to move words through a maze to their matching pictures while magic pencil paints in different objects in a picture when the child correctly matches the word up with the object. Words in Space is a speed game combining quickness of word recognition with speed of operation.

Rating ★★★★



THE CRYSTAL MAZE



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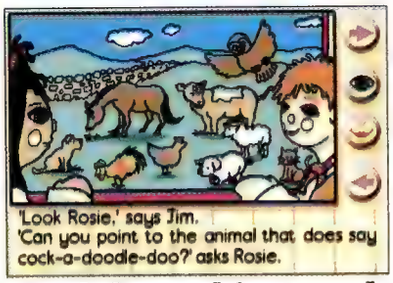
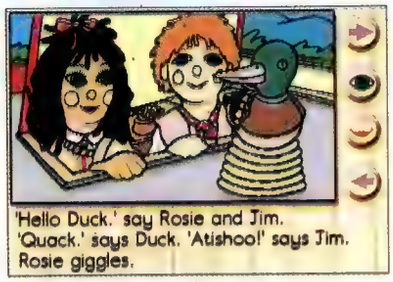
ROSIE AND JIM TALKING ACTIVITIES



'Look Rosie,' says Jim.
'Can you point to the animal that does say cock-a-doodle-doo?' asks Rosie.

Duck loses his Quack



'Hello Duck.' say Rosie and Jim.
'Quack.' says Duck. 'Atishoo!' says Jim.
Rosie giggles.

Jim gets the Sneezes

The two cheeky rag dolls from the record breaking television series for pre-school children are now available on PC using Sherston's extremely successful talking book technology

£11.75 each inc. VAT

CENTRAL

Rosie and Jim is a Ragdoll production for Central Independent Television

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Junior Software

Paul Mallinson and **Keith Pullin**, being at that age where they should be old enough to know better, are the perfect team to review the Junior age group software.

Junior Essentials

10 out of 10

Any child with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, will immediately feel at home with this package. Basic mathematics, sentence structure, spelling, French and thirty other specific subjects, including how to tell the time are covered with the aid of six enjoyable games.

All graphically pleasing, but somewhat lacking in speech or sound effects, these games may well seem familiar to younger parents, with Breakout and Nemesis clones among some of the challenges awaiting youngsters.

Rating ★★★★

Mario is Missing

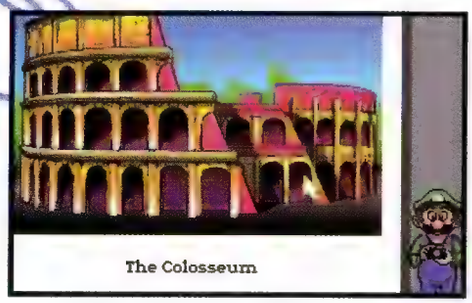
Mindscape

Every kid can associate with Mario, Nintendo's bouncing Brooklyn plumber. With crisp visuals to help, these two brothers have now turned Geography teacher.

In this educational escapade, Luigi must rescue Mario who's been kidnapped by Bowser (an evil dinosaur). You accompany Luigi around the world learning about Capital cities, historical places and meeting famous people from the past and present.

The whole family can learn a thing or two by playing *Mario is Missing*. A great way to discover the planet.

Rating ★★★★

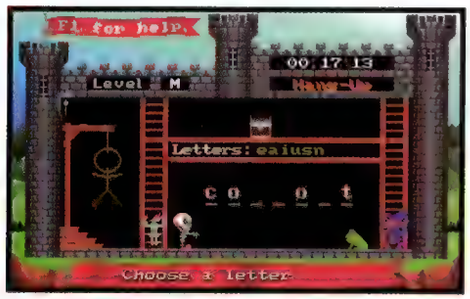

The Colosseum

Henrietta's Book of Spells

Lander Software

Nothing to do with witchcraft for the young, *Henrietta's Book of Spells* is a spelling tool that's only really suitable for the under tens. Using five classic word games such as hangman, you are taught a basic vocabulary, most of the time limited to six letters. The trouble with these sort of programs, is that there must be a large database of words to choose from, to avoid repetition. This doesn't and I often found words repeating within seconds. This lack of depth throughout the package means, it will be useless as a learning aid very quickly.

Rating ★★



Multimedia Language System

Infogrames

Mixing humorous games and everyday objects, animals and people has resulted in this enjoyable French tutorial for four year olds and over. Games such as 'find the cheese' require you to guide a mouse around various rooms of a house looking for his favourite snack.

The whole package is a french environment and all commands are clearly spoken in that language.Unfortunately there are only two levels of difficulty, but they are of quite a high standard. A great package though and undeniably helpful.

Rating ★★★★

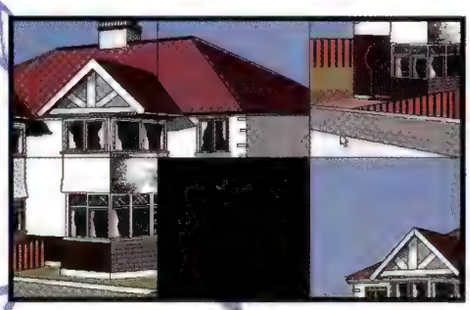
Second Steps

Mindscape

Endorsed by Birmingham City Education Department, all I can say is watch out if you're bringing your kids up in Birmingham. This, the second part of the Second Steps series, is a pitiful attempt to teach kids the basics of computing.

Overrun with menus, it seems as though the education part of this was merely an afterthought. The three games Click, Slide it and Point encourage you to master the complicated (ahem) art of using a mouse. It's amazing what you can buy these days, it really is...

Rating ★



Hooray for Henrietta

Lander Software

Mathematics; the bane of every child's schoolday! Hooray for Henrietta approaches the subject in the best way – light hearted yet informative. Once again though, the blurb on the box has been a bit over ambitious when it comes to the age group; five to fourteen – plus, is the claim. Nine years maximum is the reality.

Pleasing graphics add to the enjoyment of this unpopular subject and are effective in holding your attention. Pretty soon though, as with Henrietta's Book of Spells, the highest standard will be achieved.

Rating ★★

Kid Works 2

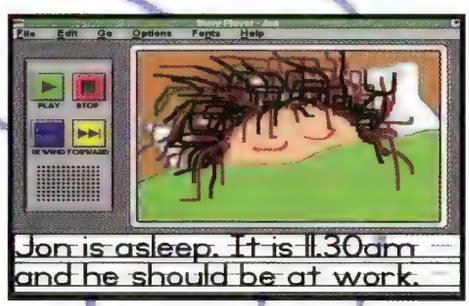
Ablac

KID Works 2 is designed to introduce children to the fun of writing and illustrating their very own stories. Contained within the program are a number of simple, easy-to-use utilities, combining a word processor, a paint program and advanced text-to-speech technology.

There's a word processor, a paint package and an icon designer.

Kid Works 2 is a lot of fun and will appeal to parents looking to enhance their child's creativity and understanding of words and sentence structure.

Rating ★★★★

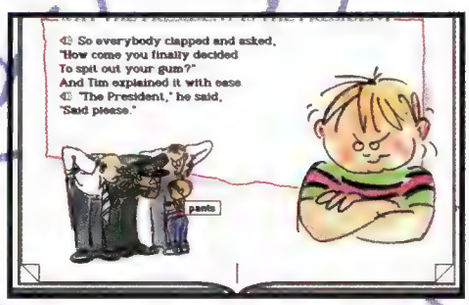


Somebody Catch My Homework

Discis

As a piece of software, Somebody Catch My Homework is faultless – as a learning tool it's worth is questionable. The main problem being that self-reading books fail to teach reading skills at a level that their silent counterparts currently achieve. What I mean by that is; software that actively encourages a child to read, rather than just listen, will be more effective as a reading aid. This problem aside, *Somebody Catch My Homework* is beautifully put together – the display is bright and clear, illustrations are fabulous and typefaces are bold and crisply defined.

Rating ★★★



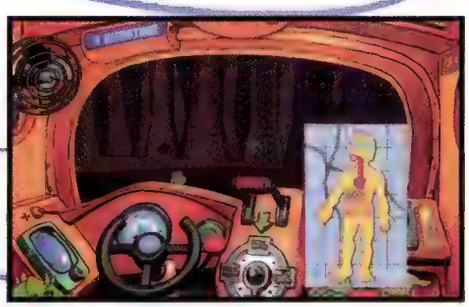
The Magic School Bus Explores the Human Body

Microsoft Home

SCHOLASTIC'S wild and wacky Magic School Bus range takes kids on a colourful journey through the human body in this point-and-click adventure.

The Bus shrinks in size before being swallowed by Arnold, then the journey begins. There are 12 different parts of the body to explore – from the brain to the small intestine – each with a dedicated science experiment and a whole bundle of facts and figures included. The presentation of the program is top notch throughout, and there are even some amazing cut sequences.

Rating ★★★★



The Magic School Bus Explores the Solar System

Microsoft Home

School teacher Ms. Frizzle goes too far and ends up getting lost on one of the nine planets of the system. It's up to the class to find her by exploring, discovering the secrets of the Solar System and picking up clues as to her location. *The Magic School Bus* once again becomes a useful tool for exploration and learning, allowing access to multimedia reports, science experiments and nine games included to bump up the fun factor. The program contains an abundance of realistic video, coupled with hundreds of clear photographs and diagrams.

Rating ★★★★

Memphis Math: Treasure of the Tomb

Word Perfect/Main Street

Your name is Dr. T.C. King. You're a professor of higher Mathematics. You travel to Egypt with two goals in mind; to study ancient Egyptian mathematics and search for the long lost Equations of the Pyramids.

Treasure of the Tomb concentrates on decimal and fraction problem solving and it does this in a highly effective and entertaining manner. With over 180 activities, 1800 problems, adjustable mastery levels, excellent graphics, superb sound and frantic action, *Treasure* should teach and entertain kids aged 8 to 11 quite effectively.

Rating ★★★★

Mind Games

Scops

Understanding the different cultures of the world can be a headache for even the most dedicated Sociologist, but Ozzie, the green character in Scops' Mind Games, is here to give children aged between five and ten an introduction to global culture. There are four tasks that Ozzie introduces, from sliding puzzles to jigsaws and maze games. The program concentrates on the development of thinking skills, with memory, perception, orientation and hand-to-eye co-ordination being most important. Mind Games should find a niche with the younger MPC user.

Rating ★★

3-D Body Adventure

Guildsoft/Knowledge Adventure

Knowledge Adventure have a reputation for producing high quality educational software, and 3-D Body Adventure is no exception. The excellently rendered 3-D graphics are the strongest aspect of the program. To start with, the user is presented with a 'visible' body that can be rotated through 360 degrees by moving the mouse around. From here, specific organs and features can be selected for more detailed information. In the CD-ROM version there are 15 spectacular video segments that show the inner workings of the human body in great detail.

Rating ★★★

The Great Computer Adventure

Europress Software

Computer literacy is something that everyone should grow up with. As computers become more important in everyday life, it has become apparent that children need exposure to computers at a relatively early age. *The Great Computer Adventure*, aimed at children aged eight and over, is an educational program that introduces young people to the fundamental basics of computer use. Using the program is fun for a while. It comes on a single floppy disk but manages to stay relatively varied, even after repetitive use.

Rating ★★★

Math Blaster: In Search Of Spot

Ablac

The terrible Trash Alien has captured Blasternaut's pet Spot and has whisked him off to a faraway planet. The first task is to collect fuel for the journey by collecting trash with Trash Zapper – solving simple math problems awards Blasternaut with more shots on the Zapper. From here the trash is recycled into fuel for the spaceship using the Number Recycler – then face to face with the alien. *Math Blaster* is well put together and enjoyable to play. It would have been good to see a bit more variety, but what there is works very well.

Rating ★★★

Counting On Frank

EA*Kids

THE local Jelly Bean contest is causing quite a stir in town. Henry and his dog, Frank, have set their sights on the first prize – a trip to Hawaii. In order to win the prize the contestants have to guess the number of Jelly Beans in the jar. But it's not just a case of simply guessing. Henry and Frank set off to find clues, hidden in the form of mathematical problems. There are three levels of play spanning basic arithmetic through fractions and percentages. There are four separate maths activities and eight maths environments.

Rating ★★★★

Sitting On The Farm

TAG Developments

Sitting On The Farm, on first inspection, appears very similar to many of the talking books already available to buy. It's only when you delve deeper into the program that you realise that there's more to it.

There are four ways to use this package; the story can be read out to you, you can read along, you can sing along to it, or you can write your own. Kids can even record their own version of the song by singing into a microphone (not supplied). Finally, the Write Your Own option allows children to provide their own words to existing pictures.

Rating ★★★★

Peter Pan

EA*Kids

Help Peter Pan defeat the evil Captain Hook with the aid of his four Paintbox Pals. Peter Pan must be helped through more than 30 different scenes and hundreds of possible choices in an adventure through Never Never Land. As the story unfolds, constant problems halt Peter Pan's progress – selecting and using one of the Paintbox Pals will clear the way for young adventurers. The concept is very good. To be honest, EA's Peter Pan isn't an overtly educational package, but it's a great deal of fun to use and is of a high quality.

Rating ★★★★★

My First Incredible, Amazing Dictionary

Dorling Kindersley

AIMED at kids ages three to seven, *My First Incredible, Amazing Dictionary* is an interactive introduction to over 1000 words and their meanings. Featuring an essential first vocabulary of key words, compiled by experts in the field of early learning, this well-rounded package features hundreds of excellent animations, an abundance of clear, well read speech and countless other surprises at the click of a mouse button.

Further to this; there are a number of fun word games included to help reinforce what the children have learned in the Dictionary.

Rating ★★★★★

New Internet magazine!

New from Paragon Publishing, the publishers of *PC Power*, *CD-ROM User*, and the best-selling *Internet and Comms Today*, comes a stylish magazine to guide you through the Information Superhighway with ease.

Net User will get you started, whether you are a single user or plugged into a large corporate network, explain to you what all the interesting sites are and where to find them, and lists all the latest information. From films, music, online magazines and newspapers, to free software and games – it's all inside this essential guide to the Internet and online services.

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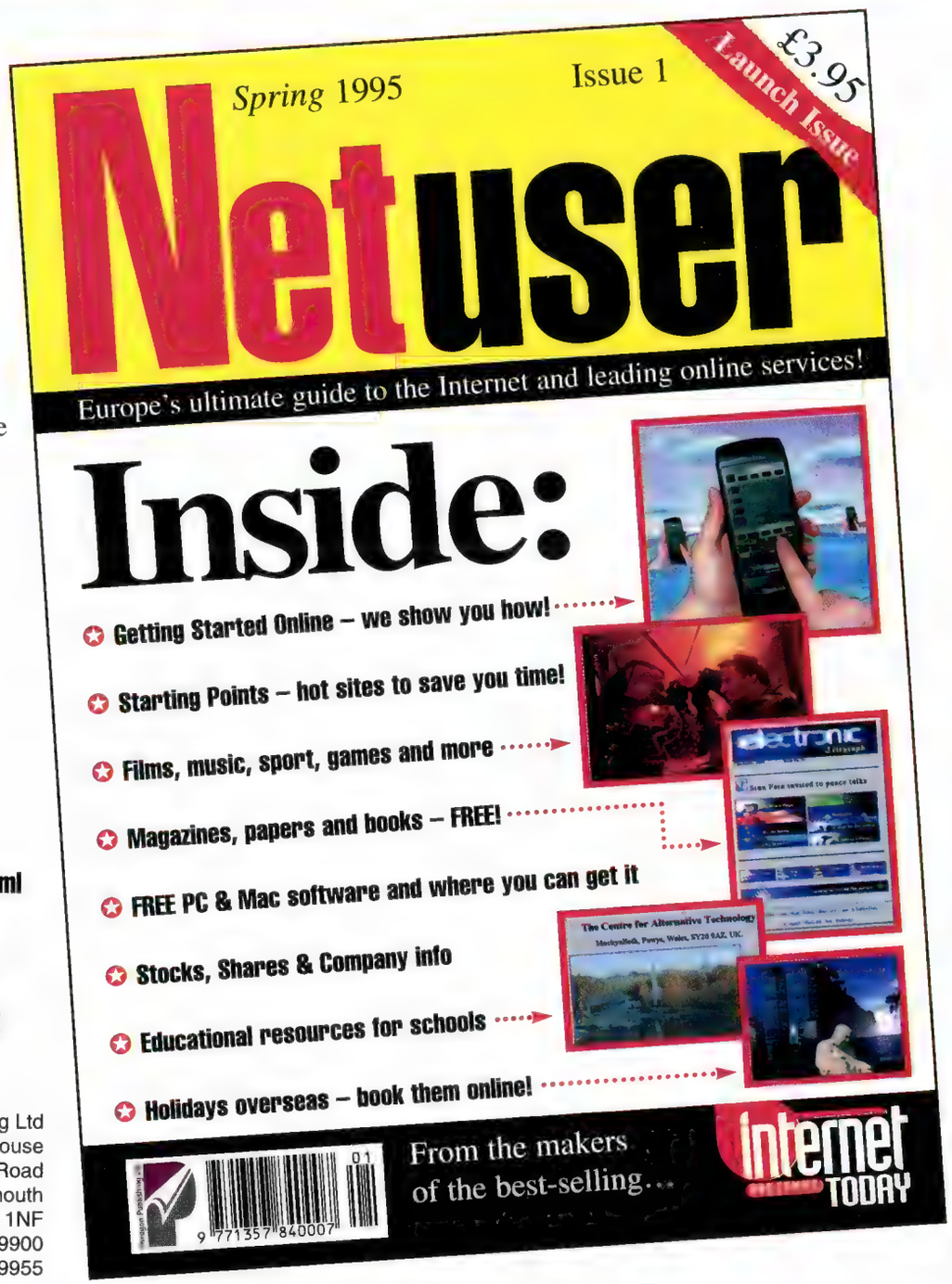

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Sierra-On-Line is a company that has been producing quality educational and family products for over ten years. The Sierra Discovery series has won many awards and has recently been re-packaged and re-released.

The Sierra Family Fun and Edutainment Pack is a compendium jammed full of fun software for all age ranges – young children to adults. For the younger MPC user, titles such as *Alphabet Blocks*, *Mother Goose* and *Mixed-Up Fairy Tales* will help enhance reading skills and basic problem solving. For the older child, *Eco Quest 1&2*, *Turbo Science*, *The Castle of Dr. Brain* and it's sequel *The Island of Dr. Brain* cover everything from maths and basic science to ecology and environmental politics.

The Family Fun section contains a varied array of puzzle games, adventures and simulations. *Sid & Al's Incredible Toons* is an enjoyably simple puzzle game. The World-famous *King's Quest* and *Space Quest* games will keep an entire family adventuring for weeks to come, and *Aces of the Deep* – a submarine simulator – will engross those who like a challenge.

The Sierra Family Fun and Edutainment Pack contains 17 software titles in total, including:

Educational:

Alphabet Blocks • Mixed-Up Mother Goose • Mixed-Up Fairy Tales • Eco Quest 1 – The Search for Cetus • Eco Quest 2 – The Secret of the Lost Rainforest • Pepper's Adventures in Time • The Castle of Dr. Brain • The Island of Dr. Brain • Turbo Science • Japanese Berlitz

Family Fun:

Sid & Al's Incredible Toons • The King's Quest Series – King's Quest 1 – 6 • The Space Quest Series – Space Quest 1 – 5 • King's Quest VII • Laura Bow II • Aces of the Deep

One lucky reader will walk away with this fantastic prize – it could be you.
All you have to do to enter is answer the following three questions correctly and send in your entry.

1 Aces of the Deep is a
- **a.** Fishing game ☐
- **b.** Submarine simulator ☐
- **c.** Flight simulator ☐

2 How many King's Quest games have there been?
- **a.** Seven ☐
- **b.** Six ☐
- **c.** Five ☐

3 Which of these two titles was released first?
- **a.** The Island of Dr. Brain ☐
- **b.** The Castle of Dr. Brain ☐

Name.....
Address.....
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Return your entries to Sierra Software Competition, CD-ROM PC Kids, Paragon Publishing Ltd., Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, BH1 1NF.
The closing date for the competition is April 1st, 1995.
Photocopies or postcard acceptable.
One entry per household only.
Your name may be used by the sponsor to advise you of special offers or other promotional material. If you do NOT want to receive any future mailings please tick the box ☐

The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. No entries from employees (or their families) of Paragon Publishing, Sierra or any company directly associated with this competition.

Reference Software

This section of reviews covers CD-based reference software. Much of it is intended for use by school-age children, with the content and presentation slanted towards their wants and needs. However, big kids like **Kirsten Foster** need educating and entertaining, too.

The Environment, Series 2: Land and Air

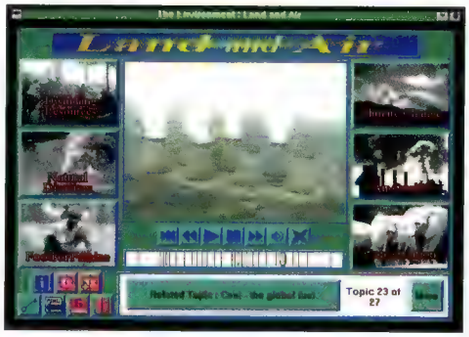
Interactive learning productions/YTV

This series started as a university research project, and its sources include many government and academic research papers. The CD is accompanied by information on how it relates to the National Curriculum, with ideas for related project work.

Land and Air covers the topics; Natural Disasters, Dwindling Resources, Food or Famine, Planet Change, Air Quality and Conservation, looking at causes and consequences and giving real-life examples.

The CD is built up of text articles, accompanied by video clips, pictures and sound, which can all be separately manipulated. You can even edit different media from different articles and put them together to make your own projects. This product is very easy to use and includes an index, a keyword search facility and a glossary to help you.

Rating ★★★



Microsoft Ancient Lands

Microsoft Home

The overall style of the Microsoft Home series is colourful, relaxed, almost jokey. This can be seen in Ancient Lands where you are introduced to the history and society of Ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt, with the help of guides – drawn characters who tell you stories about their lives.

The CD makes full use of its multimedia capabilities, including pictures, text, sound and video (including clips from films such as Antony and Cleopatra and Ben Hur). Each screen is presented like a beautifully drawn page with a text description of the subject accompanied by illustrations and sound effects. A page may contain hypertext or icon links to other pages or to video clips or audio clips, and every screen contains a map of the country involved and a diagram of its history.

All aspects of life are covered, from politics to religion, from art to architecture.

Rating ★★★

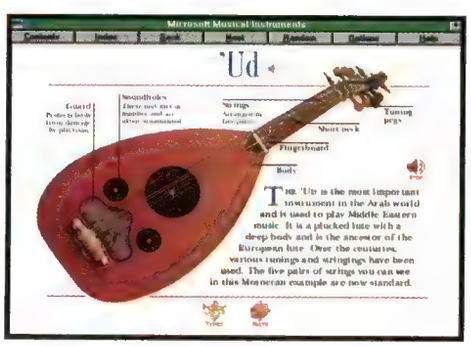
Microsoft Musical Instruments

Microsoft Home

Musical Instruments is full of...musical instruments! They're all here, from the nose-flute to the didjeridoo and everything inbetween. These tuneful items are arranged in four ways: families (i.e. brass, woodwind, etc); in an A-Z index; world (examine the native instruments of a particular country); or ensemble (jazz, rock, orchestral etc.). There is no video in this package, but there is plenty of sound. Each instrument comes with a demonstration of its sound, some include audio clips of particular musical pieces, others can be 'played' by clicking on notes of a scale.

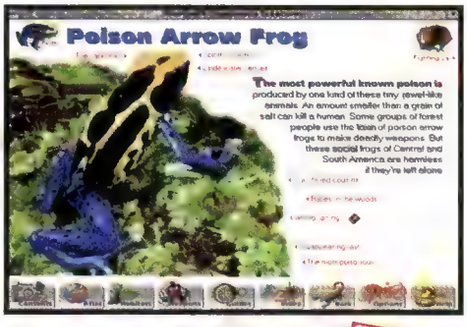
Musical instruments shows the relationships between various instruments, how they are played and where they originate from. It also describes various types of music, how they developed and what instruments are used for them.

Rating ★★★



Microsoft Dangerous Creatures

Microsoft Home



Like all the Microsoft Home products, this begins with an overview movie to help you find your way around. You can search for a particular topic using the index, or concentrate on one of the topics included; Atlas; Weapons; or habitats. Or you can use a guide. These provided a narrated look at certain aspects. There are lots of pictures and video clips and plenty of wonderful animal sound effects. This is a product which is more suitable for the younger child, and it includes simple little games to help the child learn about the animals featured.

Rating ★★★★

Microsoft Encarta '95

Microsoft

This is a massive reference work with over 26,000 articles, 8,000 photos and illustrations, 8 hours of audio and 100 movies and interactive activities on one CD. Although this is a serious reference work, it can be used by both adults and older kids. It also has more lighthearted, entertaining aspects. It has a general knowledge quiz, which is also linked to articles, and there are a number of interactive activities you can perform. You can hear real-life experiences of Immigrants to America, explore fractals, check your diet for nutritional value, compare the world's languages or change the orbit of the Moon around the Earth.

Rating ★★★★★

Hutchinson Multimedia Encyclopedia '95

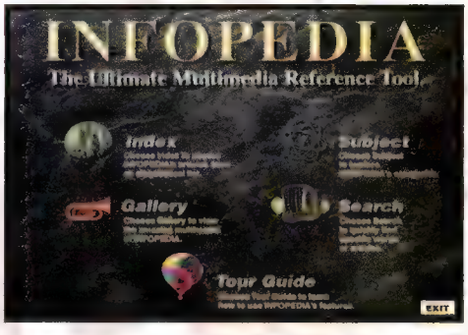
Attica

This CD includes separate sections dealing with history and geography. The Timeline section divides history into periods which you can click on, narrowing the search down until you reach a year by year table of events. At each stage you can click on a picture to find out about a particular event. The Atlas is just that. Click on the area you want to examine and the picture will zoom in. Click on a particular place and an index of related articles will appear. Of course you can also use the A-Z index or the topics index, or use the keyword search facility. There are also other lists of video clips, quotes etc. which are included in articles.

Rating ★★★★

Infopedia

Future Vision Multimedia



If you've ever wanted to buy a whole collection of reference books, but haven't had the money or the space, this is the CD for you. Infopedia accumulates an encyclopedia, dictionary, atlas, thesaurus and more on one CD. An American voice takes you on a tour of this massive work. This product uses the usual indexes and search tools and hypertext links (although these seemesd to be rare). There is also a media gallery in case you are only interested in video or animations. Although I found this CD to be a little more awkward to use it is a very versatile package which can be anything from a dictionary to a video library on your PC.

Rating ★★★

One World Atlas

Virgin

A stylish, almost 'Rough Guide" style cover sets the tone for this imaginatively-produced CD. The menu screen consists of a traveller's log surrounded by a traveller's belongings, all serving as links to various parts of the package. For example, clicking on the camera links to a gallery of photos from around the world.

You can travel to the areas you are interested in by clicking on the A-Z list of place names. Text info and photos are available for each place. One of the most interesting aspects of this package is the satellite view of the planet. The presentation of the package as a whole is very evocative.

Rating ★★★★

Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Science

Dorling Kindersley

The menu screen looks a little different from the usual clear, hand-drawn pictures of other Dorling Kindersley products. A strange contraption of many parts, looking like something out of a computer game, leads you to the different sections of this CD. You can investigate the Earth & Universe, the Periodic Table, Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Life Sciences, or a Who's Who of scientists. There's also a quiz, which leads you to the relevant article to find the right answer. The subjects are divided into topics, which are then divided into articles, which include text, hypertext, pictures, animations and a narration (American). All this means you can follow a line of enquiry down a large, narrowing pyramid of screens, building up a comprehensive knowledge of the relevant information as you go.

Rating ★★★★★

The Way Things Work

Dorling Kindersley

This is one of my favourite products. It's aimed at younger children, as it uses funny stories about mammoths (!) to illustrate the mechanical and scientific principles involved. These are narrated in a silly, 'mad scientist'-type of voice. There are individual screens which explain how particular things work (telephones, TVs, etc) and which have hyper-text links to other screens explaining such things as how sound travels and how magnets work. More general questions are answered too, in screens and sequences which explain the principles of science and the history of scientific discoveries. All is presented in the usual DK style of distinctive, story-book style drawings, and a pyramid structure of screens and hypertext links to other screens and animations. You can have great fun just exploring!

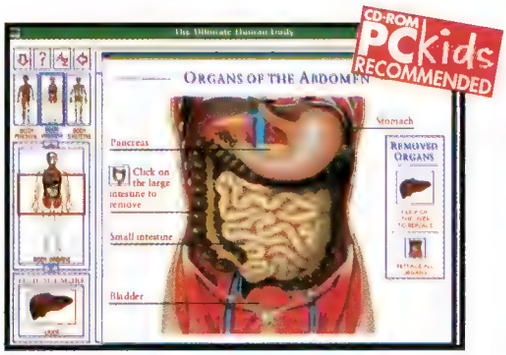
Rating ★★★★★

The Ultimate Human Body

Dorling Kindersley

The human body is the perfect subject for DK's technique of examining a topic by stripping it bare, layer by layer. When you're using this product you almost feel as if you have a real human body in front of you which you can take to pieces and examine. The body is divided into the body machine, organs and systems. You can use these to structure your search or ignore them and concentrate on particular bdy parts. You can zoom in and out to look at a particular area of the body. For example, if you zoom in on the head, questions such as 'why do you blink?' appear. Click on these and an animation and narration will provide the answer. You can also use the trusty old index. However, once you've found the answer to one question, ten more questions will pop up and you'll want to find out more.

Rating ★★★★★



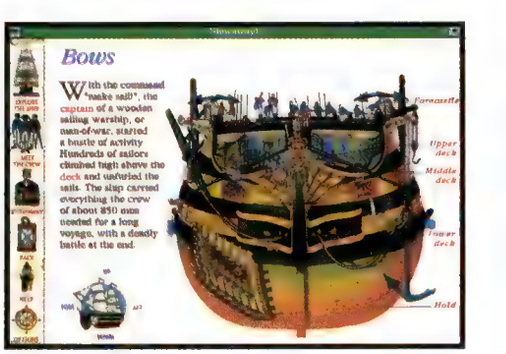
Incredible Cross-Sections: Stowaway!

Dorling Kindersley

If you've seen any of the Stephen Biesty books, you'll know what to expect. This is a magical insight into life on an C18th warship. What the CD has over the books is the ability to use sound and animation, which it does to great effect.

Stowaway! consists of an illustration of a warship, cut into sections, so that all the activity at different levels of the ship can be examined in close detail. Some fascinating facts can be learen about life at that time. Find out where sailors went to the toilet, how they were punished and what they did for fun! Included in the CD is a game, where you have to try and spot the young stowaway hiding in the ship. The lively stories told by the delightful animations scattered throughout this immense and carefully crafted CD should keep all the family happy.

Rating ★★★★



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That's Entertainment

There's a fine line between education and entertainment these days – over the next few pages **Geoff Spick** takes a look at some products that fall more on the entertainment side side of the fence.

Twiins in Trouble

This title requires some installation to hard disk although its an easy process. On loading you can choose between English and French language versions.

The game itself is about the adventures of Jennie and Tom, the player can choose to be either character. After this selection has been made a rolling introduction shows the other character being kidnapped by goblins and taken away into another world through a picture hanging on a wall. The adventure is about your efforts to rescue the lost person using the mouse to control the character.

Graphics are fine and clear, although the character graphics are a little basic. Sound is of good quality with voices and music coming from the CD. The adventure starts off simply enough allowing a child to develop problem solving skills and learn how to play adventure games.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC1 and DOS
BY SCOPS Software
Rating ★★★★

Slater and Charlie Go Camping

Slater and Charlie is badged as being suitable for 3 to 8 year olds, although the office reaction seems to indicate that adults like it too. After installing the program to the hard disk, you are presented with the option to Read or Play the story. There is a paper book included that accompanies the story as well as a small compass.

When reading the story the text is highlighted at the bottom of the screen as it is read out by a voice actor. When playing the story you can click with the mouse on various parts of each screen to produce effects from the dragon characters. The animations of the dragons are brilliant and will entertain anyone watching.

FORMAT Floppy
REQUIRES Windows or DOS
BY Sierra Software
Rating ★★★★

Davidson's Kid Phonics

CD-ROM PCkids RECOMMENDED

Kid Phonics is designed for children aged 4 to 7, it is an all Windows product, easy to install and use. *Kid Phonics* isn't just a cut above the other titles in this section, it blows them away, literally if you have the speakers turned up to high. The characters involved are loveable creations, the music and singing are top notch and the games are first class entertainment. You can play word games with songs to learn over 200 words, spelling and about words that rhyme.

There are also colouring in and sentence creation games that add even more fun to the proceedings. You can print out the results of your creations, allowing permanent records of your work to be kept for posterity. Overall this product is reasonably educational and great entertainment.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC 1 and WINDOWS 3.1
BY Davidson
Rating ★★★★★

The Educational Disk

This CD is actually a collection of shareware products for you to try out. It covers a wide range of educational topics from maths and science to geography. It is also designed to teach about computers and applications such as word processing. What you get when you run the program is a menu system that leads to sub menus of all the programs contained. The actual software varies and ranges from simple graphical maths programs to reasonably challenging geography programs.

The age range varies quite a bit for the different programs, most of the teach some form of mouse control with the computer, but since some of the target areas for clicking at with the mouse are quite small in some programs reasonable coordination is required, as is a clean mouse.

Overall there is something for everyone within this package, finding out which programs are suitable or not is purely down to trying everything out. Remember, these are shareware programs and a further payment may be required if you are to continue using them.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC 1, DOS and Windows
BY Microforum
Rating ★★★

Mutanoid Word Challenge

This is fairly odd as educational entertainment programs go being part shoot 'em up, part scrabble and part crossword. The package claims that the program is aimed at all age groups and this seems fair enough. There are four skill levels to choose from and the program saves your scores and keeps track of your progress.

You play against Mutanoid opponents and are given a selection of letters scrabble style. Questions are asked in the style of "The F _ _ _ sits on the lily pad" for easy level. If you use all your letters then you go to the Superbonus round where you shoot letters to make bonus words. As a simple word teaching program for younger kids *Mutanoid Word Challenge* works very well.

This game would probably suit children upto the age of 12 or 13, any older and it becomes too easy to win, even on the hardest level.

FORMAT Floppy
REQUIRES Hard disk and DOS
BY Europress
Rating ★★★

Four Footed Friends

Four Footed Friends comes with beautiful rendered graphics and in four languages, English, French, Spanish and Japanese. There are three characters that guide you through the product, one presents facts about the animals in question, another presents words and spelling and the third lets you use a small art package.

Most while the graphics in game graphics aren't as stunning as the rendered images they are very impressive for what is basically a pictures, words and colouring in game. There are also some games to play, as well as many hidden suprises lurking around the pages.

The action is all mouse controlled with a friendly point and click interface, the sound quality is excellent and the voices are pleasant to listen to. All in all a very impressive package.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC 2 (8MB of RAM)
BY Vroom Books
Rating ★★★★

T.J. Finds a Friend

This is a totally American product that struggles to work for English children. It contains a message from the host of America's most Wanted, their version of Crimewatch. Which is only one of its problems.

The windows based story and adventure game are well presented with good graphics and sound and a helpful resource guide that acts as an encyclopedia.

The aim of the product is to raise awareness of preventing child abduction – a noble aim, but all the 'inbred' references that seem to be everyday occurences to Americans throw it off course. It may work for young children but it takes a long time to run through the story and they may get bored with it very easily.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC1 and Windows 3.1
BY Media Resources
Rating ★★

3 Balloons – Alphabet, Numbers & Shapes

3 Balloons is a fairly simple program aimed at 3 to 6 year olds and, as the title suggests, covers counting, the alphabet and basic shapes. Each area is presented by one of the three balloons. There's Anthony A, Semi-circle and Hobie-1, each character has their own appropriate song.

Playing the games consists of watching animated letters, numbers and shapes in the discovery window and finding the appropriate one in the playscape window. All the action takes place on the one screen.

The graphics and sounds and are top notch, scores can be kept and printed out from a menu. Parents can adjust the difficulty levels, choosing from linear, random or custom mode.

FORMAT	**CD-ROM**
REQUIRES	**MPC1**
BY	**T/Maker**
Rating	★★★

My Favorite Monster

Apart form teaching your children to favourite incorrectly, this CD won't exactly stretch your children too much. Aimed at 4 to 10 year olds it uses basic cartoon graphics to present a junior adventure which in conjunction with a wall chart lets your children hunt for items within a haunted house.

There are many different objects to click on that perform stunts throughout the game which provide some interest. There doesn't appear to be an overall goal in the adventure, all you can do is discover all the little secrets.

This product doesn't have the flair or engrossing touches that some of its competitors have so I can't really recommend it.

FORMAT	**CD-ROM**
REQUIRES	**MPC 1**
BY	**Simon & Schuster**
Rating	★★

Dr T's Singalong Classics

Singalong Classics is basically karaoke for children aged between 3 and 10, there are over 25 songs for your entertainment, ranging from Baa Baa Blacksheep and Hickory Dickory Dock to some obscure America numbers like Polly Wolly Doodle and Red River Valley. A booklet comes with all the words and notes so children can play a reasonable distance from the monitor if they want.

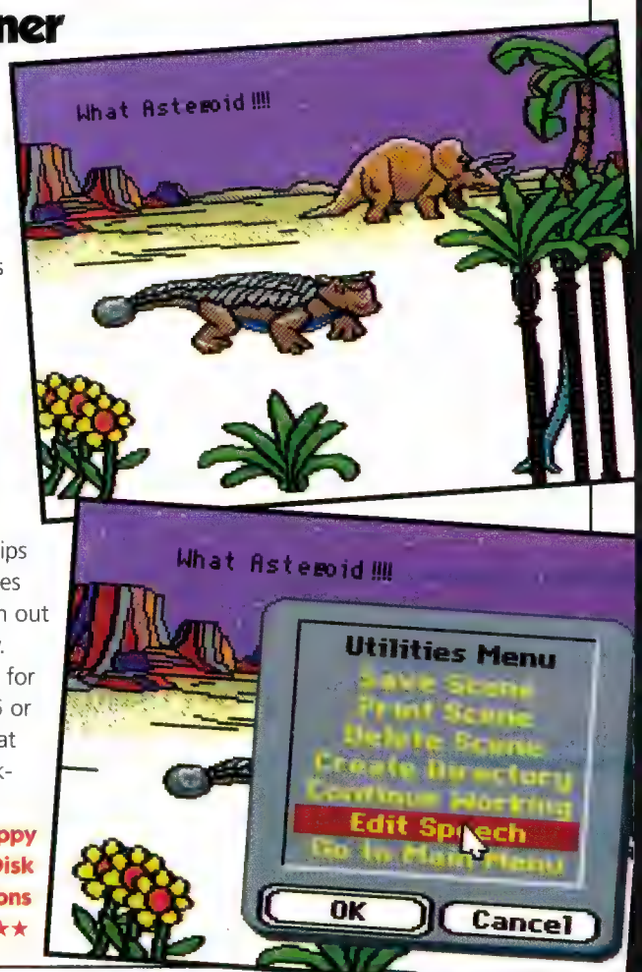
The program can play music off the CD with or without vocals or through your soundcard allowing your children to impress you with their singing talent.

The words scroll across the bottom of the screen along with musical notation in either note or guitar form. A ball can be employed to bounce along the words in time to the music if you wish. Cartoon actors playing out the actions can also be used if desired.

FORMAT	**CD-ROM**
REQUIRES	**MPC 1**
BY	**Dr T's Music Software**
Rating	★★★

Dinosaur Designer

Dinosaur Designer is a rather fun, if slightly elderly package, that enables you to create your own species of dinosaur from a set of stock body parts, add them onto a landscape populated with plants, regular dinosaurs and other effects and build a story around them set over frames similar to a comic.



You can add talking speech bubbles to your scenes to describe the story. The graphics are primitive looking in EGA but are effective and colourful. The menu system is east to get to grips with. Using basic DTP style utilities you can layout pages, print them out and chop and change your story.

The box claims the product is for kids of all ages but I think that 5 or 6 is probably the minimum age at which a child could use the package properly.

FORMAT	**Floppy**
REQUIRES	**Hard Disk**
BY	**Hi Tech Expressions**
Rating	★★★

The Treasure Hunt

Treasure Hunt is an excellent example of junior entertainment on CD-ROM. It contains a story and fifteen games and puzzles all based around the treasure hunt of Captain Mouse and his crew. The program uses beautiful art, excellent sound, music and presentation to draw the player into the adventure.

My only reservation is that the box claims to be for 4 to 9 year olds. I think that four year olds would have trouble spotting some of the more subtle objects in the hidden items and spot the difference puzzles. Along with the puzzles and story there is a painting package which is also fun to use.

With its easy to use interface and controls, this is a pleasure to play and I think adults would enjoy it as well although the almost constant animal noises get a little annoying at times.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC2
BY Screenplay
Rating ★★★★★

Circus

Wow! Of all the products reviewed here this one stands out as the most memorable. Clowns with their trousers smouldering, exploding magic hats, plus some of the usual type of play activities as well as some unusual ones make this program stick out above the crowd.

The graphics and sound are of a very high quality, the program uses both drawn and rendered sequences to achieve its effect as you wander around and inside the big top in search of entertainment.

Among the activities are dressing the clowns, reassembling them after the magician has mixed up their bodies. It's all here.

It doesn't say what age group this is suited for and younger children may feel bemused by some of the goings on.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC2
BY Matra Hachette
Rating ★★★★

Professor Iris' Fun Field Trip

Professor Iris is a character familiar to anyone who watches the Discovery or Learning Channels on satellite or cable. This field trip consists of an African safari, there are many things to do within the package.

Firstly there are the standard words and painting pages, then there are a selection of Professor Iris' music videos to which children can sing and dance along to. Finally there is the animal creator where you can play with the existing African animals and change them into new species.

The quality of sound and graphics is top notch although some of the animations seemed somewhat jerky on our review computer.

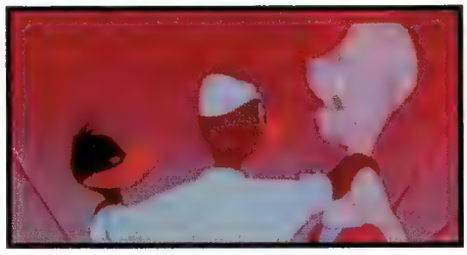
The CD provides lots of information and entertainment for kids and is highly recommended.

FORMAT CD-ROM
REQUIRES MPC2
BY The Learning Channel
Rating ★★★★★

Video CD

Video CD isn't just the domain of the blockbuster and cult film markets, children's products are also getting a look in. Here we have four new Video CD's to view. Two episodes of the *Shoe People*, *Classic Popeye Adventures* and *Daffy Duck and Friends*.

The quality of the *Daffy Duck* CD is pretty bad, although some of this may be attributed to the age of the cartoons. Popeye suffers from similar problems while the *Shoe People* CD's are more recent but still suffer from blurring and blocky edges. Obviously cartoons aren't the most amenable medium when it comes to being digitised.



School Report

Ged Start goes back to school to see how computers can be used in the classroom.

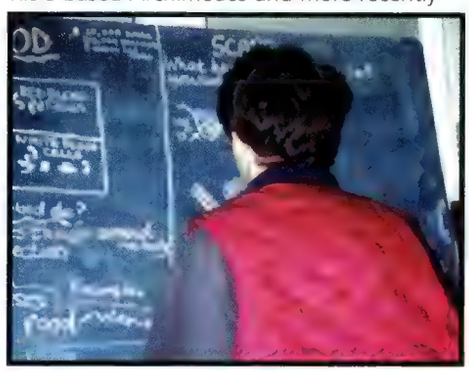
THE chances are, that anyone over the age of 30 never got to use a computer in school. I remember when the first electronic calculators appeared in the mid 1970s and they were ludicrously expensive (even by today's standards). Calculators were barred from use in the classroom for several years as only a handful of pupils could afford them.

For many parents, the first computer they used was an 8086 based Amstrad 1512 running some very basic (pun intended) software. Schools, however, had become involved with computers a little ahead of the PC revolution in business. The first machines to appear were put together from kits by eager teachers with an interest in technology. It's an experience to see one of these now because, compared to the machines of today, these appear as archaic as Babbage's adding machine.

Next came such delightful machines as the BBC micro and the Dragon 32. The BBC became particularly popular with schools because it was so well supported. Initially computers were used to learn about computers, but it wasn't long before software appeared to help with other subjects - especially maths and English.

It wasn't long before two companies emerged as the dominant forces for supplying hardware for education, Acorn and Research Machines. The latter name may not be familiar to many parents (and teachers), but they were responsible for the range of Nimbus computers. Early Nimbus' (or is that Nimbi?) used a proprietary operating system which in plain English meant that they weren't compatible with anything else. From 1987 onwards, all Nimbus machines have been PC compatible.

Acorn machines have developed along their own path with the introduction of the RISC based Archimedes and more recently



the RISC PC. From a parents perspective, Acorn's have always been a bit of a problem. While they are undoubtedly excellent

Research Machines

SCHOOLS have very specific needs with regards to computers. Firstly each machine is going to be used by a large number of pupils of varying ages and levels of skill. Also there will always be problems with children playing pranks by deleting files or installing their own software.

Because of Research Machines long history of working closely with the education market, they have been able to develop a range of machines that offer all the power and flexibility of the industry standard PC with the security and networking capabilities that schools need.

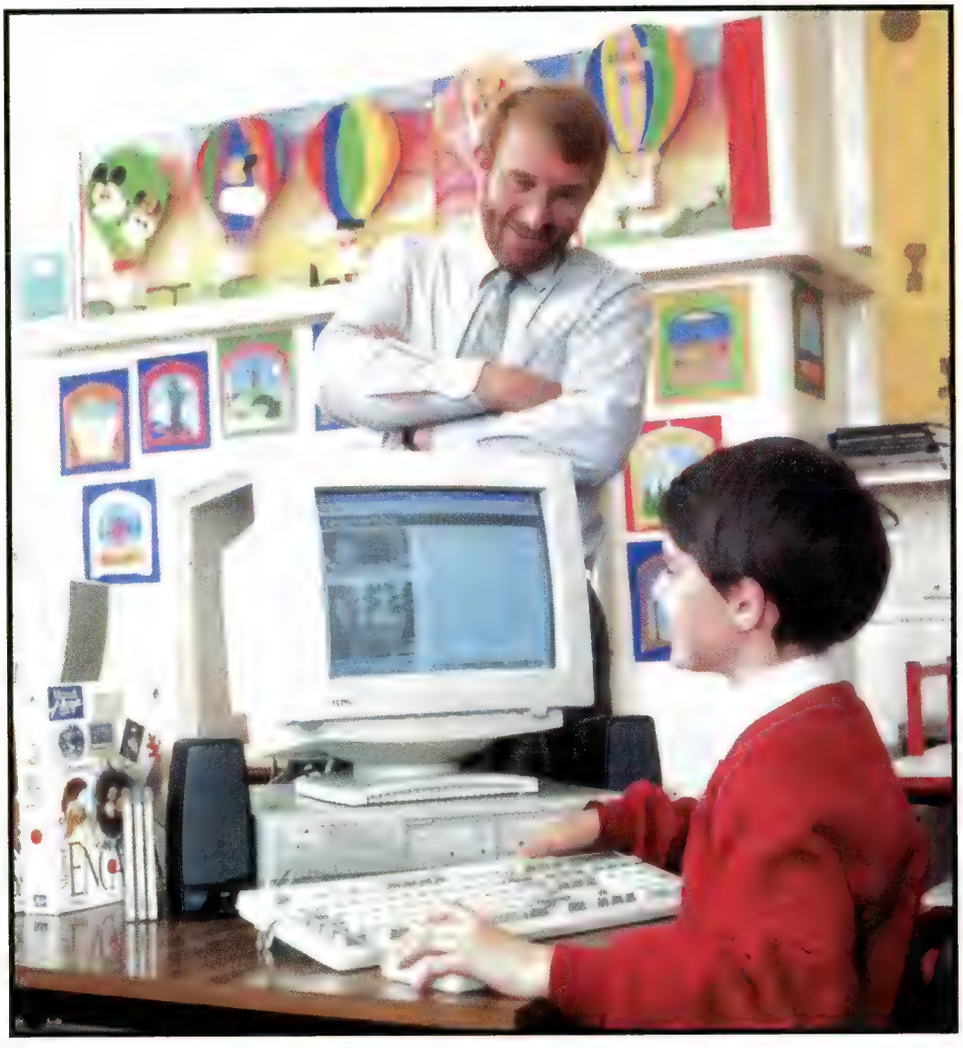
At the entry level, the have the Windows Box PCs. These are to all intents and purposes standard machines with special versions of Windows and other software included. Their version of Windows has a secure user interface that allows teachers to restrict access to certain facilities and programs. For instance, pupils can be prevented from moving or deleting icons and files while only being able to load the wordprocessor and an encyclopedia.

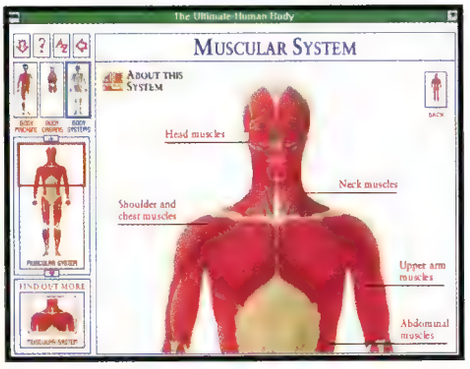
RM are also one of the leaders in the world of networking – the leaders in the education sphere. For '95 RM have been working on the next stage of their networking strategy with the development of the RM Open Network. As well as linking together all the PCs, it will make it possible to run non-PC machines on the same network.

Nick Jepson from RM commented: "The extension of the RM Net LM to non-IBM systems will allow schools to join the mainstream of computing worldwide, by enabling them to make sensible use of existing computers and realise the benefits of a school-wide network."

Research Machines specialise in supplying equipment to schools, schools or teachers who want further information should contact Research Machines on 01235 826000.

School Report



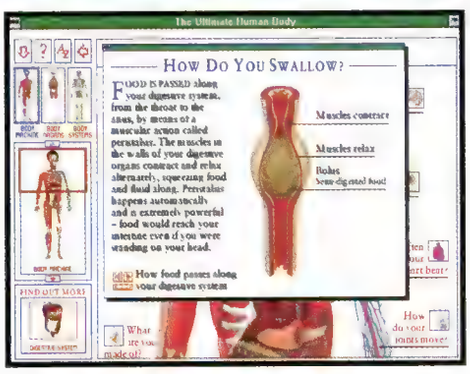


▲ **Commercial multimedia packages are used extensively by schools throughout the country**

machines – far better than PCs in many respects – they are not used widely anywhere outside of the education sphere. This has meant that concerned parents have been placed in the situation of having to choose between buying a PC similar to the one in their office or an Archimedes like little Johnny uses at school.

The debate about PC versus Acorn is an old one and there's a wide range of opinions on offer. The development of the RISC PC (an Archimedes compatible machine with both a RISC processor and an expansion card with an Intel 486 processor) means that schools and parents will be able to have the best of both worlds – for a price.

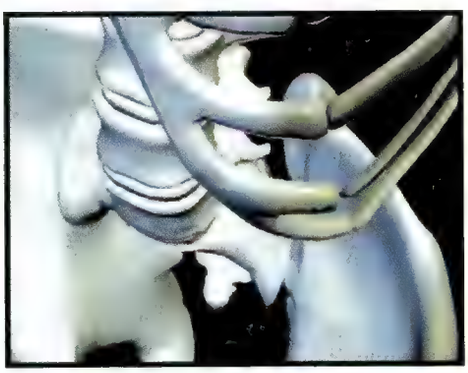
We are all aware that the levels of funding available to schools make it difficult for them to make investments in IT. At the time of writing this, it has just been announced



▲ **The children at school visited here were using Dorling Kindersley's The Ultimate Human Body**

that schools throughout the UK need millions spending on the upkeep of the buildings. Which do you think comes first in the list of priorities, a new computer or a roof that doesn't leak?

I could easily get bogged down discussing the shortcomings of our current education system, but it would not solve the problems. Suffice to say that while there are initiatives to help schools obtain equipment, very few schools have enough money to spend on computers and peripherals. All parents are (or should be) concerned about the standard of education that their children



▲ **Knowledge Adventure's excellent 3D Body Adventure also made it into the classroom**

are receiving, so the onus is on you to take an active interest in the school(s) that your children attend.

Now that I've finished preaching, I am going to explode a few myths. Talking to teachers, it's quite apparent that a fair proportion of parents don't understand how computers are being used in schools – especially at primary level. From the teachers' perspective, there seems to be three main categories that parents fall into.

The first are those who do have a fair idea of how the computers are being used – these tend to own a computer at home and use it regularly. The second are those that use a computer at work and assume that the school's's computers are used for word-processing, maths and teaching computer skills and programming – they are only half

right in their assumptions. The final group is those that believe that the computers are used for playing games or frivolous pursuits.

Yes, these are sweeping generalisations, but every parent I know falls into one of the above categories. So, what are schools really using their computers for? To find the answer to this question, I visited Barrow Hill Junior School in St John's Wood London.

Software in the classroom

BARROW Hill Junior School while typical in many respects is unusual in that it has one of the highest ratios of computers to students in the UK, approximately one computer for every ten pupils. Few schools at any level can make such a boast.

Several factors caused this situation to come about, timing, coincidence and a commitment to the use of IT in the classroom by the headteacher and his staff. Timing was crucial because of the way the school is allocated its budget. Headteacher Roger Hurn had a lot to say on the subject:

"We wanted to make sure that we achieved a coherent IT policy throughout the school."

Several years ago, the school had been linked with the Adult Education Service, who installed a network of ten Nimbus 8086 based PCs for running adult training

▲ The Microsoft range of reference software is popular at Barrow Hill Junior School

courses on the premises. When the AES moved on, Roger approached them to see if the school could buy the network. With the help of school funds and some contributions from local businesses. This type of commercial sponsorship is not uncommon in some areas, but non-existent in certain parts of the country.

A network of 8086 machines would be obsolete in a business environment, but Barrow Hill are still able to put it to good use. On my tour of the classrooms, I witnessed a class of nine year-olds using the network as part of a lesson about three dimensional shapes and patterns. The children were working three to a machine with the teacher taking time out with each group

◀ 3D Body Adventure comes with a pair of 3D glasses – as the pupils have discovered!

during the course of the lesson.

The school has several other older PCs which still see regular service, but the shining jewel in the crown is the recent acquisition of a 486 Windows Box and colour printer for every classroom. These were being used to great effect by the year six (10 to 11 year-olds) fro their class project about the human body.

The children, again working in groups of three, were using Dorling Kindersley's *Ultimate Human Body*. This made an ideal reference work for the project as pupils could print out text and graphics that could be used straight away. Having a colour inkjet printer hooked into the system also made a big difference.

Leaving year six, I couldn't fail to notice the computer art pinned up on the corridor walls. Much of this had been done by seven year-olds using text-art to manipulate their

▲ The Broderbund Living Books appeal to kids because of the high quality graphics and speech

names. I think many parents would be startled by what a young child can achieve with a computer.

Visiting year four pupils, the children were hard at work typing up short stories

they had written using Research Machines special schools version of Microsoft Word. RM have modified the wordprocessor to make it easier for children to learn and use. The teacher can enable and disable various features depending on the age and ability of the pupils. The year four kids could open and save files, but could not access more complex features like cutting and pasting.

I would have liked to have spent more time observing and talking with the pupils, but unfortunately, my time at the school was limited. Instead, I spoke with Kate Osmond the school's head of IT. Kate had been interested in computers for some time and volunteered to take responsibility for the computers in the school.

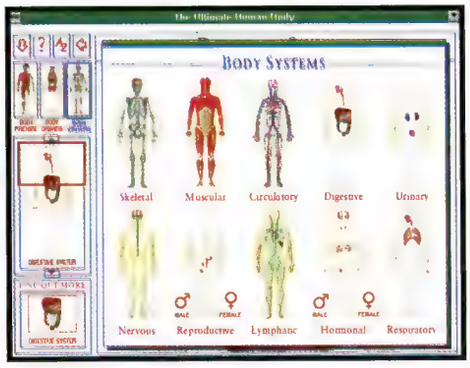
The school uses a wide range of software including several titles that will be familiar to home users. The Windows Box machines come with a wide variety of software pre-installed including the special version of Word. Apart from this, the Dorling Kindersley range of CD-ROM titles was popular both with teachers and pupils alike. Broderbund's Living Books range was also a favourite, although as Kate pointed out, it would be better for schools if the "Play" option could be disabled.

I asked Kate about the levels of competence that the children had, she replied: "It's easy to spot the children who have access to a computer at home. They are a lot more confident about what they are doing." While the school has no specific data on the number of pupils with access to a PC at home, Kate estimates that the figure is around 25% of the Barrow Hill pupils.

What about the parents? "We invited parents to come to the school so that they could try the computers for themselves and see how the children were using them." said Roger Hurn. The turnout was disappointing and quite a few adults were nervous about using the hardware. "There was a lot of the 'It's alright for the kids, but I don't understand' attitude coming from some of the parents." he added.

Roger also expressed his concern that several parents still held with the perception that computers equals games. "This is just not true, what we do here is to teach the children to control the technology and not to let it control them. With the new multi-media machines, we can get the kids to the cutting edge."

▲ **The crazy humour of Ruff's Bone is instantly appealing to older children – especially schoolkids**



▲ **The depth that The Ultimate Human Body goes into means that it is perfect as a supplement to teaching**

While apathy exists with some parents, there are others who are more involved. "Shortly before Christmas, I was contacted by the father of one of the girls who wanted to know what sort of computer he should buy. I advised him as best as I was able." Roger explained. The father had subsequently purchased a Packard Bell Executive Multimedia PC which comes with a complete bundle of multimedia titles of which Microsoft's *3D Dinosaurs* was the girl's favourite.

I asked Kate Osmond what things could be done to make the use of computers more effective in Barrow Hill. "Time is a problem, teachers need to able to familiarise themselves with the existing technology before new kit is introduced. Portable PCs for the staff would be a big help as they would be able to prepare lessons involving the computers well in advance."

The teachers at Barrow Hill are aware of how fortunate they are to have the numbers of computers they currently have. A recent visit to the school by a delegation from Japan provoked an amazed response, in Japan children don't start using computers until much later. However, as one of the delegates quite rightly pointed out, there aren't many schools in the UK with the foresight or hardware of Barrow Hill.

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Buying Educational Software

So, you've finally taken the plunge and bought that computer you've been meaning to buy for ages to help with your child's education, and (be honest) because you fancied having a go with one yourself! You've read the manuals (well, skimmed some of them at least), struggled to get the beast up and running and now you need to find that all-important educational software for your child which was how you justified to yourself buying the computer in the first place. But where do you go to get it and what should you buy?

Well, there's good news and bad news. First the good news; there is a wealth of good educational software available for most types of computers. The bad news is that finding it can be difficult as there is a substantial amount of pretty poor software around, labelled as 'educational', which is all too easy to buy by mistake.

You could try your local computer shop or one of the large chain stores that are carrying an increasing amount of 'educational' software. Sadly, a good deal of the so called 'educational' software that is available in shops is perhaps not as educationally sound as it ought to be, and what is worse, is often very difficult to view before purchasing. How many parents would feel happy going into a book shop, picking up a book to help their child's education simply on the basis of it's cover and then buying it without actually looking inside? Unfortunately, when choosing software there often isn't any other option. You can't even trust the advice of the sales person. The staff in some chain stores on a Saturday morning, many of whom are part-time, are hardly educational experts – unless of course being at a school desk the day before qualifies them to comment!

So what can you do? Well the answer is that you have to put some effort into the task. After putting the effort into deciding which computer system to buy and probably spending the best part of £1000, surely it's worth making sure that the software you purchase for your child is going to be of benefit to them. Ask your child's teacher if they can recommend a good source of educational software. Ask, at open evenings, to see what the school is using. Read reviews in magazines. There are lots of educational publishers who supply by mail order and offer a 14 day no quibble money back guarantee. Make full use of this and DO return any software you are either not satisfied with or think is unsuitable for your child. Insist on viewing software in shops, the more people that do this the easier it will become. If a shop assistant says it is not possible to demonstrate a piece of software ask if you can return it if it isn't suitable and take it home to evaluate at your leisure. The key here is to make sure you have looked at the software before you decide whether or not it is suitable for your child. If you can't vet then don't get!

So what are you looking for when you evaluate a piece of software for your child? Just what is educational software? Well it can be a lot of things. In fact educational software is any piece of software that;

- teaches new information eg. a talking alphabet program, a historical simulation
- practices a skill that is necessary for educational or personal development eg. a simple, fun, infant program that encourages a longer concentration span, an adventure containing mathematical problems, a typing tutor, a spreadsheet.
- encourages creativity e.g. a word processor, a drawing or painting utility.
- requires logical thinking and/or problem solving eg. a simulation game or adventure.
- provides an educational resource for reference e.g. a multimedia encyclopaedia or a program about plants etc.

Conversely, software that is NOT educational could be considered to be any software that:

- does not fulfil one of the above criteria!
- that only fosters quick reactions eg. a car racing game
- that could be considered morally harmful eg. violent, racist or sexist.

Do remember that it is important that any educational software you purchase is at an appropriate level for the child using it. You don't have to be a teacher to do this, most parents have a pretty good idea about their children's ability level. Use the same sorts of judgements you would use if you were buying a book. It's no good at all buying a talking book for a computer that has vocabulary, content and interest level which are way above or below your child's intellectual capability. Educational software is not going to transform your child into Einstein overnight, so don't buy software that is out of their reach, thinking that because it's on a computer your child will somehow magically be able to cope with it. Use your common sense when evaluating any educational software and you won't go far wrong.

Of course, while you have been busily researching and buying appropriate educational software your child will undoubtedly have been pestering you to buy games. Don't worry too much about this. There is nothing wrong with them playing computer games that aren't educational as long as they are balanced with programs that are educational.

However, if you are considering buying arcade-style games do vet them very carefully as many contain quite a lot of violent scenes. That said, it is possible to find games which will both satisfy your child's needs for pure fun and exercise their brains at the same time. A lot of games that aren't obviously educational actually include a great deal of problem solving activities.

Finally, a word of warning – don't be fooled by glitz, bells, and whistles; they do not necessarily relate to educational worth and can often actually detract from the educational process. Above all do not assume that just because a piece of software has 'educational' blazoned across the box that it is in fact educational. Remember, always check it out, and if in doubt, throw it out.

by Bill and Lou Bonham

Edutaining the Masses

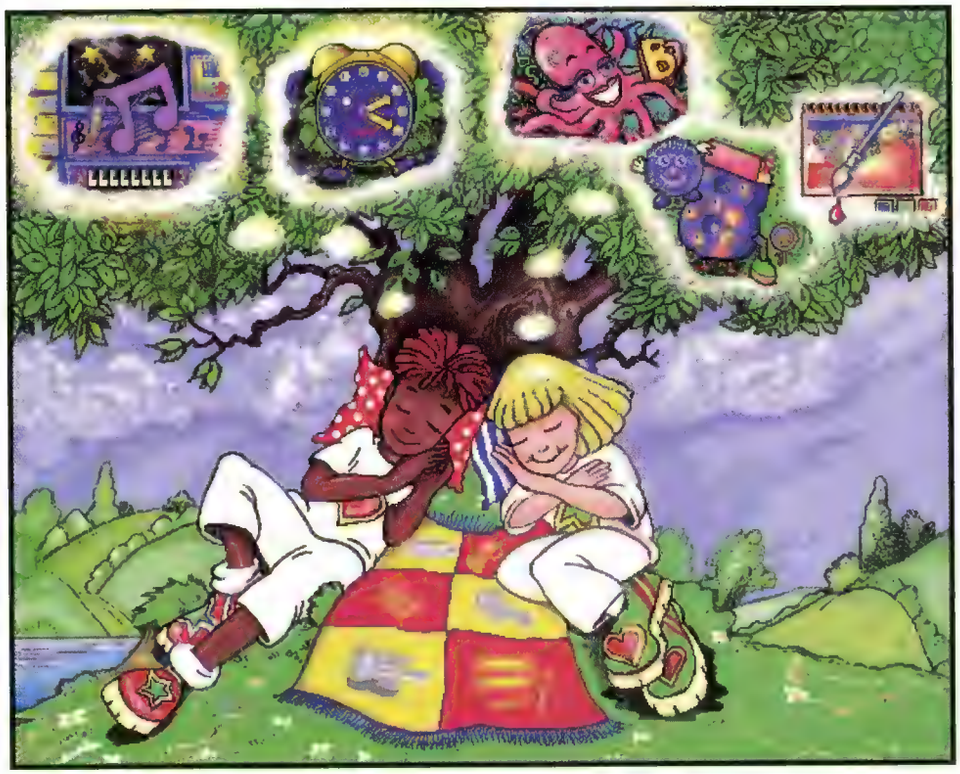
From paper to floppy disk and CD-ROM – **Lance Concannon** investigates the lengthy process of educational software development at Europress Software.

WHEN I was a lad no-one really used computers as educational tools. Of course, everybody told their parents that was the case, but only to persuade them to hand over the readies for one of Mr. Sinclair's latest games machines. In reality the quality and quantity of educational software available for home computers in those early days was minimal. As you probably know, things have changed a fair bit since then and the educational software market is booming as more parents become computer literate and discover the true potential of the PC as a learning tool for their offspring.

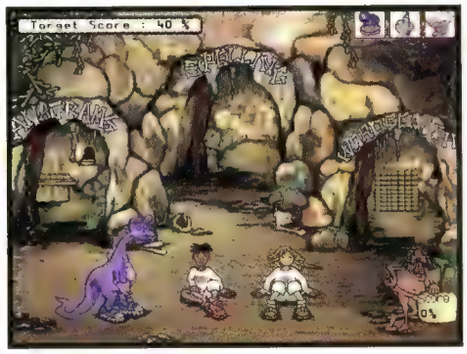
Aside from the occasional foray into the games market with products such as *Rally*, Europress Software specialise in games creation and educational packages. They currently claim an impressive seventy per cent of the increasingly competitive UK educational software market, so it's fairly obviously that they're doing something right. Their mainstay product for the last five years has been the *Fun School* range, which is now in it's fifth incarnation. Each of these packages feature a collection of games which cover basic subjects such as English and mathematics, and they are available for several age groups. I spoke to Barry Taylor, the Project Manager charged with the task of ensuring the *Fun School 5* range got onto the shelves on time to find out how you go about creating a market leading educational package.

Unlike their other products, such as *Rally* and *Klik & Play*, all of the *Fun School* programs are developed almost entirely by their own in-house team of programmers and graphics artists. They even employ a full-time musician to create the soundtracks for their software. Surprisingly, the games featured in *Fun School* are designed not by educational specialists but by the programmers themselves along with other staff at Europress. However, to ensure that the games are of real educational value to the children, Europress employ professional teachers and educationalists to ensure that the games are as edifying as they are entertaining. Many programmers have a habit of focusing their concentration on the gameplay rather than the educational value of the software.

In order to put their software through the ultimate test, Europress often hold open evenings where children, parents and teachers are invited to come and try out the latest packages and offer their opinions. Barry



▲ Fiona Carey, PR Representative for Europress Software, working hard with the rest of the team



told me that these evenings have proved to be very useful throughout the production of *Fun School 5*, and significant modifications have been made to the software based on feedback from children and parents.

In the past Europress have worked very closely with educational establishments. When producing the *Adi* range of programs they set up a customised network version of the software in a local secondary school. This is mutually beneficial, the schools get free educational software and Europress get to test their packages in the field. According to Barry, the biggest problem with getting their products into schools is simply the fact that the vast majority of them are still using Acorn machines rather than PC compatibles.

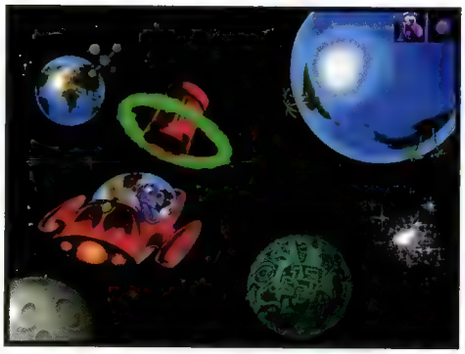
The biggest problem for Europress is getting their software completed and into the shops on time, managing the resources at his disposal is a logistical nightmare for a project manager. On any one project, there will be a menagerie of designers, programmers, artists, musicians and playtesters who's efforts all need to be co-ordinated by a Project Manager such as Barry. He also has to contend with accountants, marketing and Public Relations executives – not to mention the Board of Directors.

As soon as a programmer has finished working on his own software he will be transferred to another project that is lagging behind. This can sometimes cause problems as programmers tend to be solitary creatures and often find it difficult to unravel somebody else's code, especially if they have radically different programming styles as is often the case. Development of Microsoft Windows software has now become much easier for Europress thanks to the completion of the long awaited *Klik and Play* package. This software is the follow-up to their highly successful *STOS* and *AMOS* programming languages and allows non-programmers to create very polished looking games with minimal effort. Barry told me that *Fun School 6* will almost certainly be written entirely with *Klik and Play*.

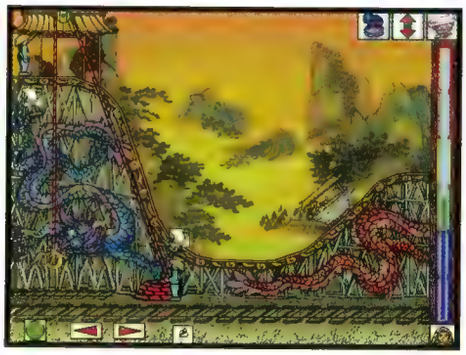
Once a piece of software is nearing completion it's time to get the playtesters in,

Every once in a while Europress Software gather together a fair-sized group of local schoolkids to test drive the latest programs that have been in development. From these get-togethers the

Product Manager at Europress can gauge how successful the software is – whether it works for the kids. Any problems discovered at this stage can be sorted out later in development.



allowing a program to go out with even a few problems in it can prove disastrous for a software publisher. Tracking down and removing bugs is one of the most painstaking tasks in the whole process. Every single game has to be played from beginning to end, every available eventuality has to be tried out to ensure that they all work properly. Once a bug is found it has to be corrected and then tested again, by this stage in the production process everybody tends to feel sick at the sight of the software after



many months, possibly years of working on the same package.

Although Europress has a major share of the UK educational software market there are more than exnough competitors who are eager to get themselves a bigger slice of the pie. As the PC increases in popularity, more and more families are beginning to realise the educational potential of the machines and there is a rapidly increasing demand for high quality software. Barry believes that Europress will maintain their lead simply because they are providing software that is designed in Britain specifically for the British market. Most of their rivals only sell American software and many parents find this off-putting as there is a distinct difference in teaching techniques on the other side of the Atlantic, it's not just a matter of slightly different spelling.

Once a product is completed Europress have to make sure that the public know that it is available. It's the job of Fiona Carey, their full time Public Relations Executive to promote the software, this includes dealing with magazine journalists to make sure the packages get (hopefully favourable) press coverage. Even when the product is complete and on the shelves Europress' work is not finished, there are always a few occasional bugs which manage to slip through the net and these have to be tweaked before the next production run is duplicated. Also, technical support is a neverending job, people frequently have problems running programs on their machines, even if the software is not at fault.

Small objects of desire

Peripherals for kids – they come in all shapes and sizes. CD-ROM Kids takes a look at some of those available.

"My" Joystick

Designed especially for children, Suncom Technologies' "My" Joystick is a brightly-coloured peripheral suited to the younger games player. With three large 'action' buttons to choose from, the stick is suitable for left and right-handed children. An ample six feet of cable has been included too, which saves on the eye strain when sat too close to a monitor.

Microsoft Home Mouse

A mouse designed to fit most hands, large or small, left or right – the Microsoft Home Mouse is comfortable and easy to use. The mouse itself dark blue in colour, quite heavy (which is fine by me – heavier mice do have their advantages) and strangely snug in the palm of the hand. The Microsoft Home Mouse comes complete with Intellipoint software, enabling complete customisation of the mouse parameters – even the mouse pointer can be changed to whatever is required. For more details, look in the Yellow Pages for your local Microsoft dealer.

AlphaSmart Keyboard

Available from TAG Developments at a cost of £199 is the AlphaSmart Keyboard – a portable, self-contained keyboard compatible with all the popular word processor and text tools. With a 32,000 character memory and eight, separate save slots the AlphaSmart seems an attractive investment for group studies, but is also good value for the solitary user.

AlphaSmart is powered by 2 AA batteries and it's advanced electronics allow 100 hours of battery life. A long-lasting Lithium battery inside the unit protects from data loss – even after switching off. At the moment only a Macintosh compatible version is available, although a Windows compatible model is expected to arrive any day now. For more info call TAG o 01474 357350.

"My" Mouse

"Make friends with "My" Mouse" says the packaging, and with a design like this, how can you fail not to?! The rodent-like ergonomics of this particular peripheral make using a computer fun for kids. Above all, the hand fits the shape of the mouse perfectly and the two mouse button 'ears' are responsive and tactile.

Novelty mice like this particular one have been seen before but this one is high quality, easy to use and will appeal to children too. "My" Mouse costs approximately £45. For more details contact Logitech on 01753 516357.

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Glossary

ACORN
UK based company responsible for the Archimedes and a range of other machines popular within the education market The company is currently owned by Olivetti and have recently launched the RISC PC.

APPLICATION
Software which performs some useful task (such as a word processor, spreadsheet, database or whatever)

ARCHIMEDES
Computer popular with schools buthardly seen outside of education as it is only compatible with itself.

ASCII
Acronym for *American Standard Code for Information Interchange*. The system by which letters, punctuation, space, control codes, etc. are encoded into numeric values for interpretation by the computer.

AUTOEXEC
A batch file that automatically launches certain programs for you when the computer is switched on.

BACKUP
Copy of one or several files, usually on a different disk drive, in case the original(s) get lost, corrupted or destroyed. This may be due to an act of user, hardware failure or some other unfriendly act – like sudden loss of power or unfriendly action by other software

BATCH
A sequence of commands that perform a given task and can be put together into operation with a single command. Easily identified by the extension .BAT on filenames.

BIOS
Basic Input Output System. The section of the operating system which creates a record of hardware present and is responsible for interfacing to that hardware.

BIT
Short for BInary digiT. It represents the smallest unit of information in a digital computer, can have a value of either 1 or 0 and represents a switch.

BOOT
Short for *bootstrap*, refers to the initial commands necessary to load the remainder of the operating system.

BUG
Error, mistake or problem in hardware, software or anything else to do with computers.

BYTE
A unit of storage. One byte is equivalent to one character, or 8 bits of storage.

CACHE MEMORY
A comparatively small amount of very fast memory which is closely coupled to the main processor.

CD-ROM
Compact Disc Read Only Memory. The use of the familiar audio CD to store large amounts of data including text, pictures, video and music (up to 650Mb).

CENTRAL PROCESSING UNIT (CPU)
The main functional unit of a microcomputer. It consists of a chip which executes program instructions and its surrounding circuitry. Often referred to as the *System board* or *Motherboard*. This chip performs all the primary handling of data and is often called the *computer* itself. These are identified normally by numbers (286, 386 and 486) though the 586 is normally referred to as a Pentium

CLOCK
The number of pulses per second produced by the computers clock, usually measured in MHz (megahertz) or millions of cycles per second.

CMOS
A memory chip that holds information about your computer and the devices attached. Power to the CMOS is backed up by a battery so that when you switch a computer off, this essential data is not lost.

COMMAND LINE
In DOS, where DOS commands are typed in, at the DOS prompt. This will probably start with:C:\> or A:\>
at least when you first start the computer up.

COMPATIBLE
A general term that indicates the ability of one piece of software or hardware to work with the commands or communications of another as easily as if both were made by the same supplier.

COPY
To duplicate. A software command which can occur between disk and memory, disk and disk, file and file.

CURSOR
A marker or indicator displayed on the monitor, which directs the viewers attention to the position of the next letter, number or object on screen.

DATA FILES
We use this term as a shorthand for the files created within an application program by a user, holding work the user has generated. These may be word processed documents, spreadsheets or whatever

DESKTOP
Configuration of a PC where it sits on a desk (horizontally), as opposed to a tower configuration PC which stands on the ground or floor on its side (vertically).

DIRECTORY
An area on a disk where related files are stored together. For instance all files for MSDOS are in the DOS directory.

DOS
Disk Operating System. A program which lets you use the facilities of a disk-based computer (for example; storing, retrieving and copying files, organising the RAM, looking after important input/output procedures etc.)
See **MS-DOS**.

DRIVER
A portion of the computers operating system which handles the input and output (I/O) to peripheral devices. The driver is also known as a device handler.

DTP
Desk Top Publishing. Normally referring to software packages which allow documents to be designed and assembled on screen (including layout and formatting of text, illustrations, photographs and other graphics). DTP provides complete control over all stages in the production of documents.

EDUCATION SOFTWARE
Programs that have been written specifically for the purpose of education, frequently to the National Curriculum guidelines.

EDUTAINMENT
A combination of serious education combined with the fun entertaiment element associated with computer games. The quality of edutainment software varies greatly, so it is worth viewing it before you buy. Some packages teach little more than basic mouse and keyboard skills while others can also be linked into the National Curriculum.

EXPANSION SLOT
Space and socket within a PC which allows additional hardware to be added in the form of an expansion card. With several different types of slot now in use, it is important to know how to recognise the differences. Consult your computer manual for more information.

FILES
Named storage units on a disk which hold information, either programs that will carry out instructions, or your data.

FILENAMES
In DOS filenames consist of three parts:
FILENAME (up to 8 characters)
(dot=full stop)
EXTENSION (up to 3 characters)
Examples; AUTOEXEC.BAT, MENU.TXT

FLOPPY DISK
A flexible disk of magnetic material (protected by a PVC envelope) used to store data and program. Floppy disks are most commonly either 3.5in or 5.25in diameter.

GRAPHICAL USER INTERFACE (GUI)
Modern, popular way of programs displaying and receiving input from a user, using pictures as a basis as well as, or instead of command words. Based on the *WIMP* philosophy of: *Windows, Icons, Mouse and Pointer* or Pull-down Menus

HARD DISK
A rigid metal disk coated with magnetic material, which has a far greater storage capacity than a floppy disk. Some hard disks are removable, but the read/write heads are enclosed with the disks in a special container which prevents dust or other contamination from contacting the disk.

HARDWARE
The mechanical and electrical or hard part or physical part of a computer system. This is in contrast to software, the programs that are executed by the hardware.

HD
High Density. A phrase used in connection with floppy disks (3.5in and 5.25in) a high density 3.5in disk can store 1.4Mb of data, a high density 5.25in disk can store 1.2Mb of data.

HEAD
The electromagnetic device, residing within the disk drive, that both reads and writes information on a floppy or hard disk.

HZ
Short for Hertz, one cycle per second.

ICON
Mini-picture intended to represent a piece of software or a file in a Graphical Interface or WIMP environment.

IDE
Intelligent Drive Electronics/Integrated Drive Electronics. IDE is a method of connecting disk drives to a computer. IDE drives have drive controller circuitry included with the drive electronics, this means that only simple interfacing circuits are required and these can be designed into the main circuit board (motherboard) or into an I/O board. This takes away the requirement for a separate disk controller card or circuit board.

I/O
Short for Input/Output.

ISA
Acronym for Industry Standard Architecture.

ISDN
Integrated Services Digital Network. The name for the digital telephone network which contains channels for digitised speech (64Kbps) and for control at 8Kbps. The control channel can be used for information services to personal computers.

INTERFACE
The connection or boundary between any two parts of a computer system, including any of its devices, the software, or the human operator, namely yourself. Two components must be properly interfaced before they can interact. See GUI.

INTERRUPT
The method programs use to stop the operation in progress for new instructions.

IT
Simple acronym for Information Technology. IT embraces all aspects of computing and related hardware and software.

KHZ
Short for Kilohertz or 1,000 cycles per second.

KILOBYTE (K)
1024 bytes, two raised to the tenth power. Since each byte represents one

character, one kilobyte produces about 150 written words.

LOGICAL DRIVE
(As in LOGICAL HARD DISK DRIVE)
Where DOS thinks there are several separate hard disk drives, each with their own letters (e.g. C: and D:), but where they are in fact separate areas of a single physical hard disk unit.

MAIN MEMORY (RAM)
The electronic storage area of the computer itself, exclusive of disks or any other external memory. Programs and data to be processed are first loaded into the main memory, or RAM, from the disk. Main memory is volatile and will not retain data if power is removed.

MAIN UNIT
Main unit of a microcomputer which usually contains Memory (RAM), CPU, motherboard, Power Supply Unit (PSU) and space for several expansion boards.

MEGABYTE (MB)
In computing terms a megabyte equals approximately 1,048,576 bytes. The storage capacity of disks is measured in megabytes. Hard disks start at 40Mb of capacity, but this is not now a practical size and a minimum of 120Mb is more suitable, with larger capacities being required for multimedia requirements. Also see **KILOBYTE**.

MEMORY
Any storage area for data and programs, internal or external to the computer.

MHZ
Short for Megahertz, or 1,000,000 cycles per second.

MICROSECOND
One millionth of a second.

MILLISECOND
One thousandth of a second.

MNEMONIC
A code or symbol that assists remembering its operation or purpose. For example, RET is a mnemonic for RETurn.

MODEM
Short for MODulator DEModulator. A modem converts signals generated by the computer into a form which can be transmitted over telephone lines or optical cables.

MONITOR
The display screen in a computer system.

MOTHERBOARD
The main printed circuit board on a computer which holds the:CPU chip, RAM chip(s) and BIOS chip.

MOUSE
A peripheral used to control cursor movements onscreen, as an alternative to the keyboard. Almost essential when using a Graphical Interface such as Microsoft's WINDOWS, or a drawing program.

MPC
An international standard for Multimedia PCs established by the Multimedia Marketing Council. Level One specified a minimum of a 286 processor, soundcard, speakers and CD-ROM drive. Level Two requires a minimum specification of 486SX processor, 16 bit soundcard, speakers and double speed CD-ROM drive. By definition, all Level Two machines automatically comply with the Level One spec.

MULTIMEDIA
Using your computer to handle a variety of different types of information including, text, sound and moving images.

MS-DOS
Microsoft Disk Operating System. The most widely used operating system for PCs.

MULTI -TASKING
A multi-tasking system allows two or more tasks or programs to be executed simultaneously.

NETWORK
A network connects PCs together, thus allowing you to share hard disks, printers and software.

ON-LINE
Immediately available from the computer. e.g. On-line Help Screen. Available immediately a special key is pressed (usually F1)

OUTPUT
Information sent from a computer to a peripheral device such as a printer, disk drive or terminal.

OVERTYPE
Editing mode where new characters overwrite those already present. The converse of insert mode. Can toggle between them using the INS key.

PARALLEL (PORT or INTERFACE)
A communications port often used for connecting a printer to a PC. Also sometimes known as a Centronics port or interface.

PCB
See **PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD**.

PC-DOS
The operating system as used on genuine IBM computers. The version on almost all other personal computers is MS-DOS.

PERIPHERAL
An external device which is attached to the computer such as a disk drive, printer, terminal or modem.

PERSONAL COMPUTER (PC)
An IBM Compatible microcomputer

POINTER
Is an arrow-shaped cursor used in Graphical programs, especially Microsoft's WINDOWS, to indicate the current position pointed to by a mouse.

POWER SUPPLY UNIT (PSU)
Electrical transformer within the main unit of a PC, converting mains voltage down to the 12v or 5v that most components use.

PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD (PCB)
Can be used to enhance the capabilities of a Personal Computer by putting it in to an available expansion slot.

PRINTER
A device which prints alphanumeric and graphical data that has been output from a computer. There are many different types of printers but they are all designed to produce images on paper.

PROMPT
The set of characters that appear on the command line before the space where you are able to type in commands. e.g. C:\> or A:\>

PSU
See **POWER SUPPLY UNIT**.

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE
See **SHAREWARE**

RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY (RAM)
The main memory in a computer composed of semiconductor material. It is also called Read/Write memory, meaning that the data can be easily read or altered. RAM is volatile and will lose its data if the power is removed.

READ ONLY MEMORY (ROM)
ROM is a type of memory which is non-volatile (is not lost when power to the computer is switched off). The contents of a ROM is permanently recorded and may be read by the CPU whenever needed.

ROOT DIRECTORY
The "contents" section of the disk where all other directories originate. For instance C:\> is the root directory of the C drive, C:\DOS> is the DOS subdirectory of C.

RUN
To start or execute a program.

SCREEN
See **VISUAL DISPLAY UNIT - VDU**

SCSI DEVICE
Small Computer Systems Interface, originally a standard developed fro Apple Macintosh computers but adopted for PCs. A device (card mounted) which allows multiple peripherals to be linked together. For example, a CD-ROM linked to a tape streamer, linked to a Syquest drive, linked to a hard disk linked to the computer. A maximum of seven SCSI devices can be controlled by one SCSI card. A series of peripherals linked this way are often referred to as *daisy chained*.

SERIAL (PORT or INTERFACE)
A communications port often used for connecting a printer or a mouse to a PC. More complicated to set up than a Parallel Port. Also known as a RS232 interface.

SHAREWARE
Software application programs available for minimal cost (the cost of the disk + P&P typically) whose authors have allowed them to be copied freely. Closely related to shareware are Freeware and Public Domain. Freeware is software that you can have and distribute for free, but the copyright is still owned by the author. Public Domain is software where the author has renounced the copyright and as such you can do with it as you please.

SIMMS
Single IN-Line Memory Module. A memory module, usually supplied in 256K, 1Mb and 4Mb sizes.

SOFTWARE
A series of instructions which is executed by the computer. A program or an application.

SPREADSHEET
A software application which is used to store and manipulate numbers and calculations. *Analogous to a word processor but for numbers.*

SUB-DIRECTORY
See **DIRECTORY**

SVGA
Super Video Graphics Array.

SYSTEM
A series of related parts or components which work together. A computer system contains elements such as a CPU, a terminal, a printer, an operating system and application software.

SYSTEM DISK
See **BOOTABLE DISK**.

SYSTEM UNIT
Term for the box which holds the main components of a personal computer, including the motherboard (including CPU and RAM chips); hard disk(s), floppy drive(s), expansion slots and the Power Supply Unit (PSU).
See also **MAIN UNIT.**

TOGGLE
To switch between two operations, usually by pressing the same key repeatedly.

TOWER
Configuration of a PC where it stands on the ground or floor on its side (vertically), as opposed to a desktop machine which sits on a desk (horizontally).

TRACK
A circular path on the disk. Tracks form a series of concentric rings on the disk surface where each ring is a separate ring.

TSR
Terminate and Stay Resident Software. Software which loads into RAM in the normal way, but doesn't release RAM memory when it has finished. It stays there to be called up at any time thereafter, usually by a special combination of keystrokes known as Hotkeys. Since it coexists with other software in memory it can be instantly accessible, but this can also cause difficulties.

UTILITY
A program used to perform common tasks such as formatting disks, sorting information, copying files or debugging programs.

VARIABLE
A data item with a label or *name*, that can be used by referring to the variable name instead of the literal value. The value of a variable may be changed during program execution if the program allows.

VGA
Video Graphics Array. A display standard for micro-computers. Also see **SVGA**.

VIRTUAL MEMORY
A facility used by system software to allocate part of eh hard disk area to be used in the same way as RAM to *fool* the computer into believing it has more physical RAM.

VIRTUAL REALITY
A form of *imaginary space* created in a computer. A computer generated world which allows interaction by wearing *gloves* and viewing by wearing a helmet. Suits are now in production which will provide a *virtual body* in the virtual world.

VISUAL DISPLAY UNIT
(Also known as VDU, screen, monitor, terminal, display)
Output device which displays the computer's output to the user on a screen in monochrome or colour. Although superficially like a television, the VDU's resolution is always better even though the screen is smaller. At any particular resolution, non-interlaced is better than interlaced.

WIMP
See **GRAPHICAL USER INTERFACE**

WINDOWS
A popular operating environment developed by Microsoft. It includes a set of programs using a Graphical Interface, which also allows other WINDOWS-compatible programs to be run within it. Also needs MS-DOS present in order to work.

WORDPROCESSOR
A software application which allows text to be stored, edited, corrected, manipulated, formatted and printed.

WRITE PROTECT
A method of preventing a diskette (or tape) being written on, while allowing it to be read as normal. When no write protect is in operation the disk (or tape) is said to be write enabled.

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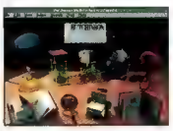

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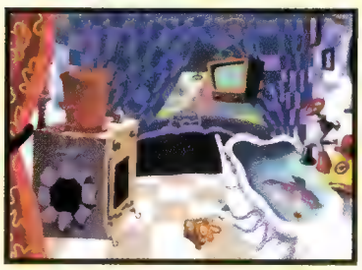

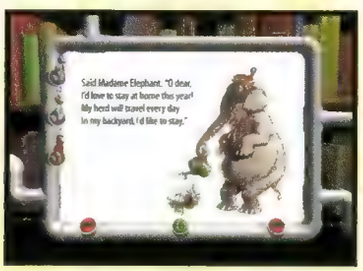

Buyers' Guide

WELCOME to the *CD-ROM PC Kids* Buyers' Guide. Featured here are the educational CD-ROM titles that you can buy.

The prices shown here are the recommended retail prices. Where a company does not quote a recommended price, we have quoted a typical street price. While we make every effort to verify the prices shown before going to press, *CD-ROM PC Kids* cannot be held responsible for any errors ommissions or changes in the market.

If in doubt, contact the supplier to verify the price before ordering.

Education

Title	Source	Tel.	Price	Age Group
3 Balloons – Alphabet, Numbers & Shapes	ABLAC Learning Works	01626 332233		
10 Out of 10 English	10 out of 10	01291 625439	£25.94	6-16 Years
10 Out Of 10 French	10 out of 10	01291 625439	£25.94	8+ Years
10 Out Of 10 Maths (Algebra)	10 out of 10	01291 625439	£25.94	6-16 Years
ADI French 11/12	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	11-12 Years
ADI French 12/13	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	12-13 Years
ADI French 13/14	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	13-14 Years
ADI G.C.S.E French 14/16	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	14-16 Years
ADI G.C.S.E Maths 14/16	Europress Software	01625 859333	£34.98	14-16 Years
ADI Junior Counting	Europress Software	01625 859333	£19.99	4-5 Years
ADI Junior Counting	Europress Software	01625 859333	£19.99	6-7 Years
ADI Junior Reading	Europress Software	01625 859333	£19.99	4-5 Years
ADI Junior Reading	Europress Software	01625 859333	£19.99	6-7 Years
ADI Maths 11/12	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	11-12 Years
ADI Maths 12/13	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	12-13 Years
ADI Maths 13/14	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	13-14 Years
Adventure Playground	Europress Software	01625 859333	£25.98	5+ Years
Adventures in Storybook Land	Pan European	01291 625439	£19.99	3-5 Years
Alge-Blaster	ABLAC Learning Works	01626 332233	£46.94	14 Years - Adult
Alistair & The Alien Invasion	ABLAC Learning Works	01626 332233	£41.00	5-10 Years
All New Talking Animated Alphabet	Sherston Software Ltd.	01666 840433	£35.20	3-6 Years
Amanda Stories	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£46.94	4-6 Years
Animated Alphabet	AVP	01291 625439	£26.97	3-6 Years
Arcventure II: The Egyptians	Sherston Software Ltd.	01666 840433	£41.00	8-9 Years
Art in the National Curriculum	AVP	01291 625439	£88.13	-
Arthur's Birthday	Living Books	01753 549442	£41.00	3-6 Years
A Silly Noisy House	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£46.88	4-6 Years
A-Train	Ocean	0161-832 6633	£40.00	13+ Years
Beat the Boss	AVP	01291 625439	£82.25	14+ Years
Biology	AVP	01291 625439	£26.97	12-16 Years
Bodymapper	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£52.82	4-11 Years
Bodymapper *Languages*	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£64.57	7-14 Years
Bookie Bookworm Talking Books	ABLAC Learning Works	01626 332233	£35.19	3-7 Years
Branch	AVP	01291 625 439	£25.85	7-16 Years

Buyers' guide

Business Dynamics	AVP	01291 625439	£27.00	13+ Years
Busy Town	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£52.88	4-7 Years
Can You Find It?	AVP	01291 625 439	£23.50	6-13 Years
Clip Art/Sounds	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£14.10	5-16 Years
Count and Add	AVP	01291 625 439	£34.98	4-7 Years
Count and Add	Lander Software	0141 357 1659	£39.99	3-6 Years
Creative Writer	AVP	01291 625439	£52.88	-
Creative Writer	Microsoft	01474 357350	£57.58	5-14 Years
Crystal Rainforest	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£52.82	7-14 Years
Dabbler	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£88.13	9-18 Years
Data Graph	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£35.19	6-11 Years
Discis Stories	Discis	01474 357350	£24.99	4-11 Years
Discovering America	ABLAC Learning Works	01626 332233	£46.94	8 Years - Adult
Disney Bundle	AVP	01291 625439	£117.49	2-8 Years
Don't Panic!	AVP	01291 625439	£99.90	14+ Years
Energy	Anglia Multimedia	01268 755811	£25.85	-
English Literature - Set Texts	AVP	01291 625439	£29.38	14+ Years
Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Science	Dorling Kindersley	0171-753 3488	£88.13	10+ Years
Factory	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£52.82	4-11 Years
Fairy Tales *for ClarisWorks*	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£29.32	4-7 Years
Find It!	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£41.13	6-11 Years
Fine Artist	AVP	01291 625439	£52.88	8-14 Years
First Letters	AVP	01291 625 439	£14.98	Under 5 Years
Fleet Street Phantom	AVP	01291 625439	£34.00	9-13 Years
Flexiwrite	AVP	01291 625439	£45.83	5-18 Years
Flying Colors	AVP	01291 625439	£46.94	8 Years - Adult
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Fred's Backyard	AVP	01291 625439	£25.96	9-14 Years
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Fun School Spelling	AVP	01291 625439	£25.98	7-13 Years
Global Explorer	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£116.33	7-18 Years
Grammar Gremlins	AVP	01291 625439	£46.94	9-14 Years
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Hooray for Henrietta	Lander Software	0141 357 1659	£39.99	5-14+ Years
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Incredible Cross-Sections Stowaway!	Dorling Kindersley	0171-753 3488	£45.83	-
Information Technology	AVP	01291 625439	£111.63	15+ Years
Inside Information: Open Learning Pack	AVP	01291 625439	£57.58	13+ Years
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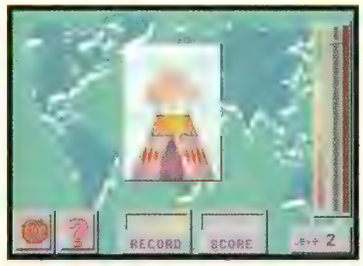
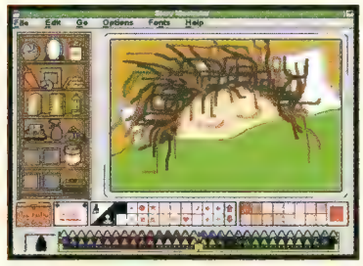
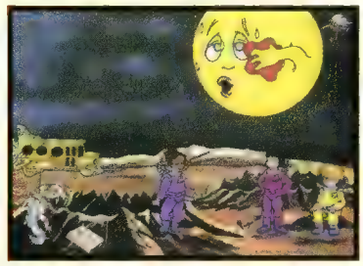
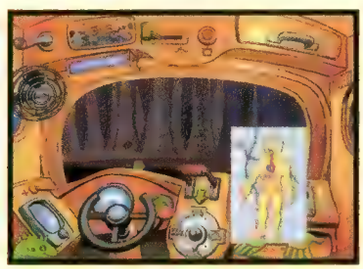
Jeux d'Images	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£41.13	4-11 Years
Josh Plays With Time	Fartsoft (via AVP)	01291 625 439	£23.44	3-8 Years
Jungle Maths and Astro Maths	AVP	01291 625 439	£21.10	5-13 Years
Just Grandma and Me	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£35.19	4-9 Years









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My First Quiz	AVP	01291 625 439	£23.44	4-7 Years
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My World *Nursery Packs*	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£21.15	4-6 Years
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Noddy's Big Adventure	AVP	01291 625439	£34.99	-
Noddy's Playtime	AVP	01291 625439	£25.98	3-7 Years
Ocean Escape/The Little Turtle	ABLAC Learning Works	01626 332233	£41.00	3-7 Years
Ollie Octopus' Sketchpad	AVP	01291 625439	£17.98	4+ Years
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Pal+Palstar	Lander Software	0141 357 1659	£54.99	All Ages
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Shapes in Design	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£34.00	4-11 Years
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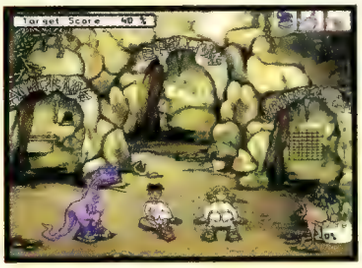

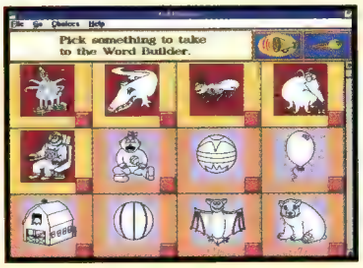

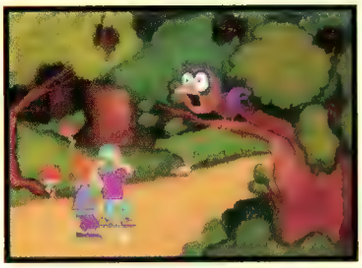

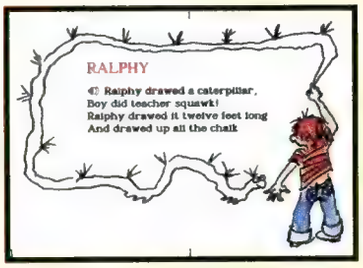

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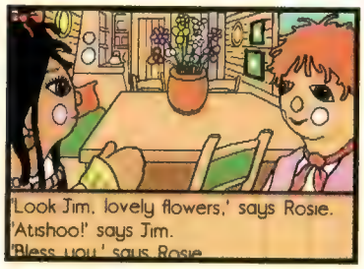

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Buyers' guide

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ZooPack	AVP	01291 625 439	£38.19	5-11 Years
Science Adventure II	AVP	01291 625439	£44.94	7 Years - Adult
Seashore Life	Anglia Multimedia	01268 755811	£47.00	7-11 Years
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65 Million Years PC	TAG Developments Ltd.	01474 357350	£25.00	7-11 Years
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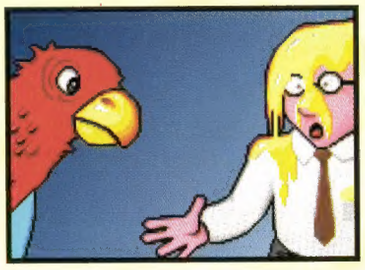

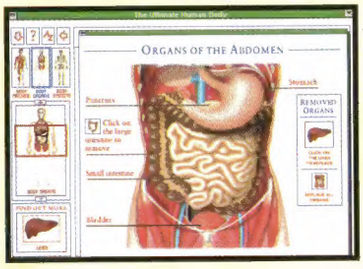

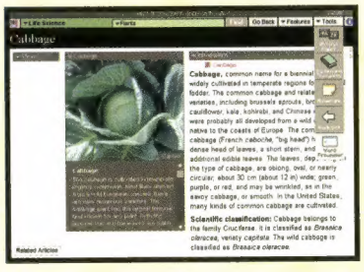

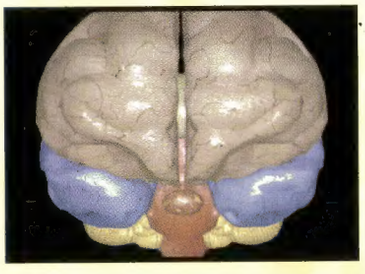

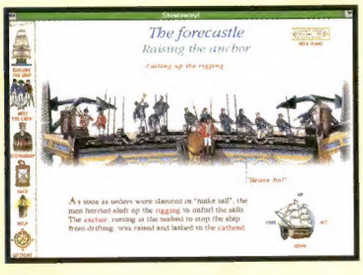

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Printed in the UK by	Garnet Dickinson
Distributed by	Seymour International
	Windsor House
	1270 London Road
	Norbury
	London SW16 4DH
Telephone	0181 679 1899
Produced by	Paragon Publishing Ltd.
	Durham House, 124
	Old Christchurch Road,
	Bournemouth BH1 1NF
Telephone	01202 299900
Fax	01202 299955
Subscriptions	01202 780578
After 6pm	01202 780478
With thanks to	Joanne Byford
	Paul Fox
	David Eccles
	Barrow Hill Junior School
	Harvard PR
	Mike Holman
	Fiona Carey
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